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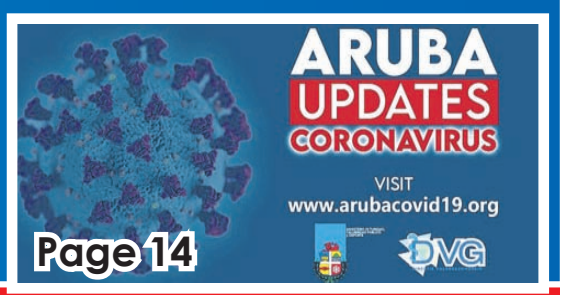


Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Trump invokes emergency authority; Big 3 automakers closing

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday moved to invoke a federal law that allows the government to marshal the private sector to fight the coronavirus epidemic, as the economic damage mounted with word that Detroit's Big Three automakers agreed to shut down all their factories to protect workers.

On a day of head-spinning developments, stocks tumbled again on Wall Street, falling so fast they triggered another automatic trading halt. More borders slammed shut across Europe and North America, with the U.S. and Canada agreeing to close their shared boundary to all but essential travel. And the Trump administration pressed Congress to swiftly pass a potentially $1 trillion rescue package to prop up the economy and speed relief checks to Americans in a matter of weeks.

Continued on next page

Traders at the New York Stock Exchange watch President Donald Trump's televised White House news conference, Wednesday, March 18, 2020 in New York.

Associated Press

Visitors to the Department of Labor are turned away at the door by personnel due to closures over coronavirus concerns, Wednesday, March 18, 2020, in New York.

Associated Press

Continued from front

Calling himself a "wartime president," Trump said he would sign the Defense Production Act "in case we need it" to deal with an expected surge in cases of the virus. The law gives the president extraordinary authority to get industries to expand production and turn out vital materials.

The news came as scientists announced the virus has infected more than 200,000 people worldwide and killed over 8,000, while the United Nations warned that the global fallout from the outbreak could cost nearly 25 million job losses around the world.

Around the globe, officials took increasingly drastic measures to fight the epidemic and the threat of a recession. California's governor warned grimly that martial law could be imposed, while the mayor of New York said the city's 8.6 million residents should be prepared for a near-complete lockdown. Czech authorities used emergency powers to raid a warehouse and seize hundreds of thousands of face masks.

With a growing number of Americans thrown out of work by the near-shutdown of much of the U.S. economy, Trump also said the Housing and Urban Development Department will suspend foreclosures and evictions from public housing through April.

Two people briefed on the matter said Wednesday that Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler agreed to close their factories. The two spoke on condition of anonymity because the closings had not been announced. The move would idle about 150,000 workers, who are likely to receive supplemental pay in addition to unemployment benefits.

The U.S. reported more than 6,500 cases and at least 116 deaths, almost half of them in Washington state, where dozens of residents from a suburban Seattle nursing home have died.

Meanwhile, across the European continent, desperate travelers choked border crossings after countries began shutting the doors against the coronavirus. And the Trump administration was said to be considering a plan to turn back all people who cross into the U.S. illegally from Mexico.

Some bright spots emerged: Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the virus was first detected in late December and which has been under lockdown for weeks, reported just one new case for a second straight day Wednesday.

But in a grim illustration of the epidemic's shifting center of gravity, the death toll in Italy moved closer to overtaking China's. Italy had more than 2,900 dead Wednesday after a record one-day total of 475 deaths; China's toll was just over 3,200.

Iran has also been hit especially hard, with more than 17,000 cases and 1,100 deaths.

In releasing the new global infection figures, Johns Hopkins University said more than 82,000 people have recovered from the virus, which causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough in most cases, with severe illness more likely in the elderly and those with existing health problems.

Still, scientists have no doubt the true number of people infected is higher than the 200,000 reported by health authorities because of the possibility that many mild cases have gone unrecognized or unreported, and because of the lag in large-scale testing in the U.S., where the effort has been marked by bumbling and bureaucratic delay.

In the first-ever breakdown of its kind in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that coronavirus deaths in the United States mirror what has been reported in other countries, with about 4 out of 5 deaths occurring in people 65 and older — and no deaths in children.

The CDC looked at more than 4,200 cases reported through Monday.

The coronavirus is present in all 50 states after West Virginia reported an infection.

In far-flung Hawaii, the governor encouraged travelers to postpone their island vacations, while Nevada ordered its casinos closed.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio warned that residents should be prepared for the possibility of a shelter-in-place order within days — a near-lockdown like the one covering almost 7 million people in the San Francisco Bay area. In the most sweeping measure of its kind in the U.S., they are allowed to leave their homes only for food, medicine or exercise.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom put the National Guard on alert for humanitarian duties like ensuring proper food distribution and public safety, as some grocery stores resorted to rationing to control panic buying. But he also said "we have the ability to do martial law" — which gives the military authority and can suspend civil liberties - "if we feel the necessity."

The Trump administration's plan for issuing relief checks to Americans calls for the payment of $500 billion in two installments, in April and May.

The amounts have yet to be decided but would be based on income and family size.

Meanwhile, miles-long traffic jams spread across Europe, where leaders have closed borders to nonessential traffic. Tens of thousands of people across the continent were struggling to return home amid the closed borders and dramatic cuts in the number of flights.

At one point, trucks were backed in Austria up for 28 kilometers (17 miles) and cars for 14 kilometers (nearly 9 miles).

In Southeast Asia, the causeway between Malaysia and the financial hub of Singapore was eerily quiet after Malaysia shut its borders, while the Philippines backed down on an order giving foreigners 72 hours to leave from a large part of its main island.

Taiwan said that it, too, would ban foreigners from entry and citizens would have to quarantine at home for 14 days.

Even tourists on Ecuador's Galapagos islands — 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) off the South American mainland — have been affected. Canadian Jessy Lamontaine and her family were stuck there when flights were suspended.

"I was in tears this morning," Lamontaine said. "I couldn't get any answers from the airline. I had no money and didn't know whether I was going to keep my job."❑

Barr: FBI probing if foreign gov't behind HHS cyber incident

By MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr vowed in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday that there would be swift and severe action if a foreign government is behind disinformation campaigns aimed at spreading fear in the U.S. amid the coronavirus pandemic or a denial of service attack on the networks of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Our primary role right now is to investigate," Barr said. "The FBI is very active, trying to determine who is responsible for these things."

U.S. national security officials said Monday there had been a "cyber incident" involving the computer networks of the Health and Human Services Department, but the networks were operating normally. They didn't detail the scope of the incident, but HHS Secretary Alex Azar later said the networks were not penetrated and that the department has taken strong defensive action.

A denial of service attack occurs when a perpetrator trying to make a network unavailable to its intended user temporarily disrupts internet connections.

It came just days after federal officials began confronting what they said was a deliberate effort by a foreign entity to sow fears of a nationwide quarantine amid the virus outbreak. Agencies took coordinated action Sunday evening to deny that any such plans were put in place, as they tried to calm a nation already on edge by disruptions to daily life caused by the coronavirus.

Barr told the AP the federal government would take action against anyone who was trying to take advantage of the crisis or against foreign governments that could be trying to spread misinformation and stoke fear or slow down the U.S. response to the virus. He didn't speculate which government may be behind it.

"When you're dealing with something like a denial of service attack on HHS during a pandemic, that's a very grave action for another country to take," Barr said. "So, if it is another country doing this, I'm sure the ramifications will be severe."

Rumors about the government's response to the spreading virus have circulated online for weeks, prompting authorities in several states to urge residents to seek out trusted sources in government and news. Barr said he had not been involved in any conversations and wasn't aware of any plans for a potential national quarantine.

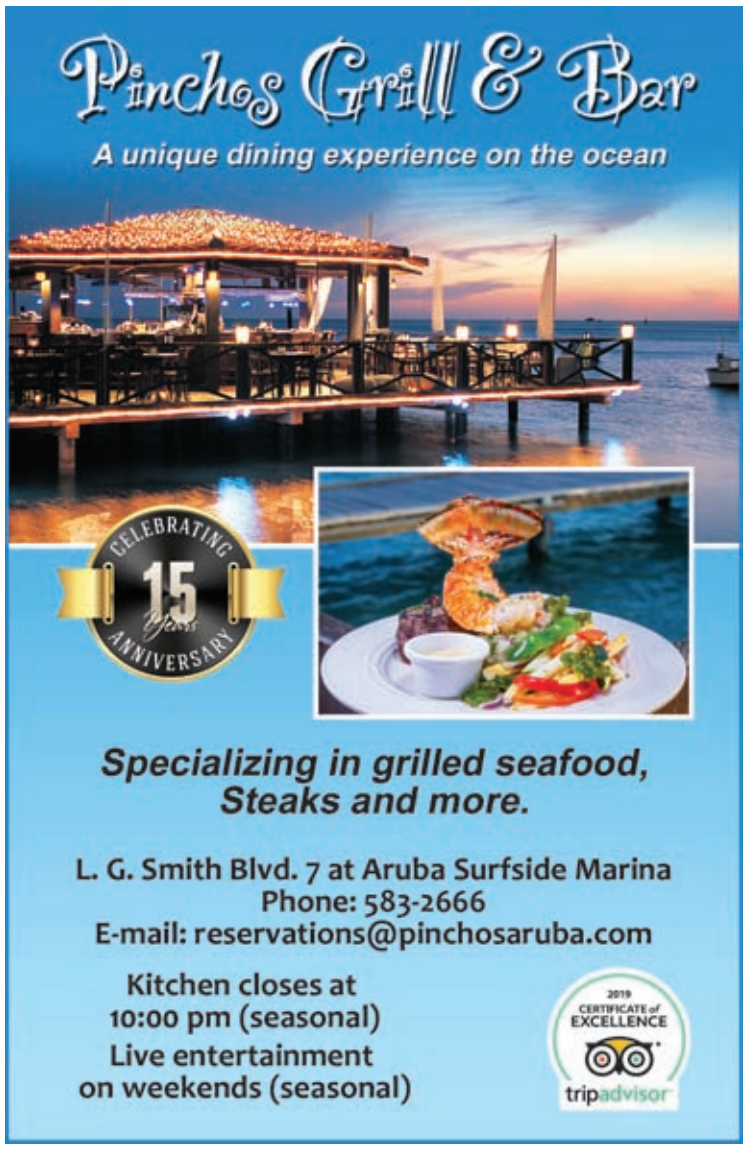
He said there had been "increasing indications of people trying to take advantage of the crisis," including reports of people selling fake test kits and phony cures.

On Monday, Barr directed U.S. attorneys across the U.S. to prioritize prosecuting all "criminal conduct related to the current pandemic." In a memo, he warned that the Justice Department had seen reports of people selling fake cures for the coronavirus, phishing emails posing as official notices from the CDC and the World Health Organization and malware inserted in apps designed to track the spread of the virus. Those cases remain under investigation, Barr said.

Attorney General William Barr arrives before President Donald Trump presents the Medal of Freedom to former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Jack Keane in the East Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, March 10, 2020.
Associated Press

"Our primary role is really to police the market and make sure people are not taking advantage," he said.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The worldwide outbreak has sickened more than 180,000 people and left more than 7,000 people dead. In the United States, there have been more than 4,000 confirmed cases and scores of deaths.❑



Sanders' campaign says he is reassessing, not dropping out

By WILL WEISSERT and BRIAN SLODYSKO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said Wednesday that he is reassessing his campaign, raising questions about whether he will drop out after losing three more states and falling prohibitively behind Joe Biden in the 2020 race.

A Sanders spokesman denied a report that the Vermont senator was suspending his campaign, but that word came as Sanders pulled down digital advertising on Facebook and Google, triggering further confusion in a contest already upended by the coronavirus.

Earlier Wednesday, campaign manager Faiz Shakir said Sanders "is going to be having conversations with supporters to assess his campaign." But Shakir also suggested that Sanders was in no hurry to make any decisions about ending his 2020 bid, noting that "the next primary contest is at least three weeks away."

More immediately, Shakir said, Sanders "is focused on the government response to the coronavirus outbreak and ensuring that we take care of working people and the most vulnerable."

Reports later surfaced that Sanders was suspending his campaign, prompting spokesman Mike Casca to say that the candidate was "not suspending. Nothing has changed since this morning's statement."

In the meantime, Sanders' campaign deactivated digital ads purchased as recently as Tuesday.

Even if Sanders decides to keep running, he has little hope of catching Biden, who used victories in Florida, Illinois and Arizona to collect nearly twice as many delegates as Sanders on Tuesday. Sanders now needs to win more than 63% of the remaining 1,757 delegates. President Donald Trump awaits the nominee.

In this image from video provided by BernieSanders.com, Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks from Washington, Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

Associated Press

For Sanders, catching up would be the tallest of orders under any circumstances. But that task is even tougher in a political world turned upside-down, along with daily life, amid efforts to combat a pandemic that has killed more than 100 people in the United States.

Neither candidate is traveling or holding campaign rallies, and much of the electorate has been staying home.

With the exception of North Dakota and the Northern Mariana Islands, Sanders has not won a contest since Super Tuesday on March 3. He made no moves to contact Biden immediately after Tuesday's results, according to people familiar with the situation who discussed the matter on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak for the candidates. During online remarks before most results were in, Sanders said little about the future of the race.

On Tuesday, Trump formally clinched the Republican presidential nomination after facing minimal opposition. On the Democratic side, higher vote totals in some key states suggested enthusiasm that even the coronavirus couldn't contain. Turnout in Florida's Democratic primary surpassed the 1.7 million who cast ballots four years ago.

Some Democrats are calling on Sanders to drop out in the name of party unity. Four years ago, Sanders kept alive his primary bid against Hillary Clinton for months, even as it became clear he had no chance of winning.

In the latest primaries, Biden maintained strength with African Americans and older voters. He also appeared to chip away at Sanders' previous advantage with Hispanics.

But the primary calendar will be disrupted by the public health and economic havoc wreaked by the coronavirus. Ohio canceled its Tuesday primary just hours before polls opened, citing concerns about spread of the virus.

The chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Tom Perez, criticized Ohio for closing polls on such short notice. But he also urged states with upcoming primaries to expand vote-by-mail and absentee balloting, as well as polling station hours.

Louisiana, Georgia, Kentucky and Maryland joined Ohio in moving to push back their upcoming primaries, and others may yet do so. As Shakir noted, that has left the primary calendar empty until March 29, when Puerto Rico votes. But island leaders are working to reschedule balloting there, too. That means there is nowhere for Sanders to gain ground on Biden anytime soon, even if he could find a way to mount a sudden surge.❑

Get out of jail? Inmates fearful of virus argue for release

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Coronavirus has become a "get out of jail" card for hundreds of low-level inmates across the country, and even hard-timers are seeking their freedom with the argument that it's not a matter of if but when the deadly illness sweeps through tightly packed populations behind bars.

Among those pleading for compassionate release or home detention are the former head of the Cali drug cartel, President Donald Trump's former personal attorney Michael Cohen, Ponzi schemer Bernard Madoff and dozens of inmates at New York City's Rikers Island, part of a jail system that lost an employee to the virus this week.

"He is in poor health. He is 81 years old," David Oscar Markus, the attorney for cocaine kingpin Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela, wrote in emergency court papers this week seeking his release after serving about half of a 30-year drug-trafficking sentence. "When (not if) COVID-19 hits his prison, he will not have much of a chance."

While widespread outbreaks of coronavirus behind bars have yet to happen, the frenzy of legal activity underscores a crude reality that's only beginning to sink in: America's nearly 7,000 jails, prisons and correction facilities are an ideal breeding ground for the virus, as dangerous as nursing homes and cruise ships but far less sanitary.

Stepped-up cleanings and a temporary halt to visitations at many lockups across the country in the midst of the crisis can't make up for the fact that ventilation behind bars is often poor, inmates sleep in close quarters and share a small number of bathrooms.

"Simply put, it's impossible to do social distancing," said David S. Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor in Miami.

The 81-year-old Madoff, who is serving a 150-year sentence for bilking thousands of investors in a $17.5 billion Ponzi scheme, had just asked last month to be released early in light of his terminal kidney disease. Now his attorney is calling on all at-risk federal prisoners to be released for their own safety because of the coronavirus.

This combination of 2019 and 2002 file photos shows Michael Cohen, left, President Donald Trump's former personal attorney, outside his apartment building in New York and drug kingpin Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela leaving the Combita maximum security prison in Tunja, Colombia before extradition to the United States in 2004.

Associated Press

"The federal prison system has consistently shown an inability to respond to major crises," Madoff attorney Brandon Sample told The Associated Press. "My concerns are even more amplified for prisoners at federal medical centers and those who are aged."

As of Wednesday, two federal Bureau of Prisons staff members have tested positive for coronavirus, a person familiar with the matter told the AP. One of the staffers works in a correctional facility in Berlin, New Hampshire, and the other works in an office in Grand Prairie, Texas, but there were still no confirmed cases among any of the 175,000 inmates in the BOP system, the person said. The person, who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, would not say how many inmates, if any, have been tested for coronavirus.

It's not just attorneys for the wealthy and powerful seeking release.

In New York, public defenders asked judges to release older and at-risk inmates from the city's beleaguered federal jails, saying pretrial confinement "creates the ideal environment for the transmission of contagious disease." The motions cite a provision of the Bail Reform Act allowing for the temporary release of pretrial inmates under "compelling" circumstances.

"I truly believe the jails are ticking time bombs," said David Patton, executive director of the Federal Defenders of New York. "They're overcrowded and unsanitary in the best of times. They don't provide appropriate medical care in the best of times, and these certainly are not the best of times."

Some authorities around the nation appear to agree. Police departments are incarcerating fewer people, prosecutors are letting nonviolent offenders out early and judges are postponing or finding alternatives to jail sentences.

In Los Angeles, the nation's largest jail system has trimmed its population by more than 600 since Feb. 28, allowing many inmates with fewer than 30 days left on their sentences to be released early. In Cleveland, judges held a special session over the weekend to settle cases with guilty pleas and release more than 200 low-level, nonviolent inmates. And in Miami, the top state attorney has urged the release of all non-violent felons and those being held on misdemeanors.

"No judge wants to have a dead prisoner on his conscience," said Bill Barzee, a Miami defense attorney.

New York City's Board of Correction this week called for the immediate release of all high-risk inmates after an an investigator assigned to the jail system died over the weekend of the coronavirus. The 56-year-old man was said to have a pre-existing health condition and only limited contact with inmates. The city's jail system has about 8,000 inmates, most at notorious Rikers Island.

However, accommodating the surge of requests poses its own challenge. Courts around the country are shutting down, with only a skeletal staff working. The chief federal judge in Brooklyn on Monday postponed indefinitely all criminal and civil jury trials, encouraging judges to conduct court business via telephone or video conferencing when possible, and to delay in-person proceedings.

Prosecutors said in court filings that the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been planning for the outbreak since January, including by establishing a task force with experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The BOP last week suspended visitation for all federal inmates, facility transfers, staff travel and training for 30 days. Newly arriving inmates are being screened for COVID-19, and even asymptomatic inmates deemed to be at risk are being quarantined. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that they would take similar steps.

Public health officials stress that older people and those with existing health problems are most at risk from coronavirus but that the vast majority of people will only suffer mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, with recovery in a matter of weeks.

But such assurances are small solace for inmates.

The Twitter account of Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney who is serving a three-year sentence for crimes including tax evasion and campaign finance violations, shared over the weekend an online petition seeking the transfer of non-violent federal prisoners to home confinement. Addressed specifically to Trump, it argues the move would "give the prison facilities additional (and much needed) medical triage and logistic space for those who will become infected." "Without your intervention, scores of non-violent offenders are at risk of death," it reads, "and these people were not given a death sentence."❑

U.S. Census Bureau suspends field operations on virus concerns

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A week after starting its 2020 count for most of the U.S., the Census Bureau on Wednesday suspended field operations for two weeks out of concern about the health and safety of its workers and the U.S. public from the novel coronavirus.

Census Bureau officials said they were continuing to monitor all operations related to the once-a-decade head count amid the global pandemic. As of Wednesday, 11 million households had answered the census questions.

Most census workers won't head into the field until May, when they'll knock on the doors of homes that haven't turned in their questionnaires. But some workers are already in the field. They were primarily dropping off paper questionnaires at places with no fixed addresses and large numbers of seasonal workers, or preparing for counts in a few weeks of the homeless and people who live in group housing such as college dorms, nursing homes and prisons.

The Census Bureau is aiming to hire as many as 500,000 workers for the 2020 census, and so far has 31,000 workers on the payroll.

Census historian Margo Anderson called the move unprecedented.

"I don't think I've ever heard of such a suspension, nationwide," said Anderson, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "We're in uncharted territory on the census, as well as everything else since last Friday."

In this Aug. 13, 2019, file photo, a worker gets ready to pass out instructions on how to fill out the 2020 census during a town hall meeting in Lithonia, Ga.

Associated Press

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the virus.

The 2020 census started for most of the U.S. last week when notifications started being mailed out and its self-response website went live. The head count officially kicked off in January in remote Alaska villages that are difficult to reach.

This is the first decennial census that has encouraged most people to answer the questionnaire online, although respondents can also answer by telephone or mailing back a form. The Census Bureau is hoping a strong self-response rate will decrease the need for census takers to knock on doors for face-to-face interviews this summer.

"The public is strongly encouraged to respond to the 2020 Census online using a desktop computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet, and can also respond by phone or mail," the Census Bureau said in a statement.

In a statement, the chairwoman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform said lawmakers were monitoring the suspension of field operations and encouraging people to self-respond.

"By responding now, you will ensure that the Census Bureau does not need to send a census worker to your door," Democratic U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York said.

The decision to suspend field operations came just a few days after the Census Bureau announced it would delay sending out census takers to count students in off-campus housing and postpone sending workers to grocery stores and houses of worship where they help people fill out the questionnaire. The bureau also said the deadline for ending the 2020 census at the end of July could be adjusted as needed.

The 2020 census will help determine how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets, as well as the distribution of $1.5 trillion in federal spending. By Dec. 31, the Census Bureau is required to give the president counts of state populations that are used in apportionment, the process of determining the number of congressional seats each state gets.

Arturo Vargas, the CEO of NALEO Educational Fund, a Latino advocacy group active in census outreach efforts, said he supported the Census Bureau's decision.

"Right now, the easiest way to make sure residents are counted is through self-response online, by phone, or by mail," Vargas said. "Emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic are precisely why our government needs accurate census data."❑

U.S. naval officer sues over military transgender ban

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A U.S. naval officer who is facing involuntary discharge because of a policy restricting transgender people from military service has filed a lawsuit that aims to force defense officials to allow her to continue serving.

The federal lawsuit, filed Tuesday, is the first legal challenge to the policy since rules went into effect in April 2019 stripping transgender troops of rights they secured under the Obama administration to serve openly and to have their medical transitions covered in their health benefits, lawyers said.

The officer, a transgender woman stationed in Massachusetts, is seeking to transition and serve in the Navy as a woman, the lawsuit says.

"This is a moment when we need all hands on deck, and there is absolutely no justification for discharging somebody who is continuing to meet all standards and wants to continue to serve," said Jennifer Levi, transgender rights director for GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders.

A Department of Defense spokeswoman said it is aware of the lawsuit and is reviewing the filings.

Under the new policy, people who have undergone gender transition are banned from enlisting, and military members who come out as transgender and seek a transition face discharge.

Service members must serve under the gender they were assigned at birth unless they began a transition under less restrictive Obama administration rules.

Four other lawsuits seeking to overturn the policy are pending in court and are expected to go to trial, but the Supreme Court last year ruled that the ban could go into effect while the cases continued.

The latest lawsuit only seeks relief for the officer, who is not named in legal documents to "minimize risk to her," her lawyers said.

The officer has served for nearly a decade, including two extended tours as a surface warfare officer, according to her complaint. She was diagnosed with gender dysphoria two months after the policy went into effect in April 2019 and told her commanding officer she is transgender shortly after, her lawyers said.

"Lieutenant Doe is now subject to discharge for being who she is, unrelated to her fitness to serve in the military," the lawsuit says.❑

In this undated photo, Lauderdale County Chancery Court Judge Charles Smith poses for a photo in Mississippi.

Police say shooting of Mississippi judge was 'personal'

MERIDIAN, Miss. (AP) — The recent shooting of a Mississippi judge outside a courthouse was "personal," authorities said Tuesday.

Chancery Judge Charlie Smith was shot near his abdomen Monday morning outside the Lauderdale County Courthouse as he was exiting his truck to go into the courthouse, police said.

He was initially listed as being in critical condition, but is now recovering, The Meridian Star reported.

"We feel very confident that it is an isolated incident and that it was directed toward him," said Interim Police Chief Lewis Robbins.

The shooting occurred in Meridian, about 98 miles (158 kilometers) northeast of Jackson.

The police have returned to the scene numerous times and are working to pull video from every source in the area, Robbins added. So far, there is no suspect and police have not found a gun.

Smith's district includes Lauderdale and Clarke counties. Among subjects that chancery judges in Mississippi handle are divorces, child custody cases, adoptions and guardianships.

Smith became a judge in January 2019 after more than 20 years as a youth court and county court prosecutor.❑

1 dead, 1 hurt in St. Patrick's Day shooting at Texas pub

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (AP) — One woman was killed and another injured in a shooting on St. Patrick's Day at an Irish pub in southeast Texas, authorities said.

The shooting happened Tuesday night at Molly's Irish Sports Pub in Corpus Christi and a suspect is in custody, police spokesman Travis Pace said.

When officers arrived, they found one woman dead and another who had been shot in the torso, the Corpus Christi Caller Times reported. Police interviewed witnesses and identified a suspect, who was later arrested after a brief foot chase, Pace said.

The suspect's name was not immediately released but Pace said that person will likely face charges of murder and aggravated assault. ❑

In this March 17, 2019 file photo, a police officer stands guard in front of the Masjid Al Noor mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, where one of two mass shootings occurred.

Associated Press

Report: Surge in white nationalism ramps up violence threat

SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP) — A recent surge in white nationalism in the U.S. has led to a growing threat of violence by factions that embrace bloodshed and advocate for a race war, according to a report released Wednesday by an organization that tracks far-right extremists.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's annual report on extremist groups said its count of white nationalist groups has risen 55% over the past three years, from 100 in 2017 to 148 in 2018 to 155 in 2019.

Many of these white nationalists are embracing "accelerationism," a fringe philosophy that promotes mass violence to fuel society's collapse, the law center said.

"In their view, political activity is pointless, and escalating violence, on a broad scale, is the only way to bring down the pluralistic, democratic society they want to destroy," its report says.

The Montgomery, Alabama-based law center described another faction of U.S. white nationalism as "mainstreamers," who often call themselves members of the "dissident right" and are trying to appeal to a wider audience.

"Much of the movement's energy lies in the growing accelerationist wing, which, for the most part, is organized in informal online communities rather than formal groups," the report says.

Over the past few months, the FBI has arrested a string of suspects linked to white supremacist groups, including The Base and Atomwaffen Division, that have advocated for violence and a race war. The man accused of attacking two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and killing 51 people in March 2019 devoted a section of his manifesto to the concept of accelerationism.

"There is little to suggest that the violence that has accompanied the surge in white nationalism in recent years will abate," the report says.

The total number of "hate groups" counted by the law center dropped by about 8%, from a record high of 1,020 in 2018 to 940 last year. But the law center said the decline "does not reflect a significant diminishment of the radical right" given an increased activity among white nationalist groups.

The law center said Donald Trump's first presidential campaign energized white nationalists "who saw him as an avatar of their grievances and their anxiety over the country's demographic changes." The conspiracy theory that white people are experiencing a "great replacement" by nonwhite populations is the most powerful force driving far-right extremism, according to the law center.

"Trump didn't create the fear of nonwhite immigrants but rather harnessed it to win the White House in 2016 and continues to nurture it by fanning the flames of resentment within the most extreme elements of the Republican base," the report says.

White House spokesman Judd Deere said that, while the administration hasn't seen the law center's report, "President Trump has repeatedly condemned racism, bigotry, and violence of all forms and his policies have reduced violent crime and made communities safer." Deere also said the law center is a "far-left smear organization that only wants to libel, slander, and defame this president with its lies."

"Their comments are disgusting, particularly while the president demonstrates unprecedented leadership to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19," Deere said in an email.❑

Africa should 'prepare for the worst' with virus, WHO says

By CARA ANNA
Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Africa should "prepare for the worst" as the coronavirus begins to spread locally, the World Health Organization's director-general said Wednesday, while South Africa became the continent's new focus of concern as cases nearly doubled to 116 from two days before.

South Africa's health minister, Zweli Mkhize, this week called that kind of rate "explosive" in the country with the most cases in sub-Saharan Africa. Fourteen of the latest cases were from local transmission — and six were in children under 10.

Though the pandemic is in its early days on the continent, health experts have warned that even facilities in Africa's richest nation could be overwhelmed by the virus' spread.

"I think Africa should wake up. My continent should wake up," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who comes from Ethiopia.

Crowded conditions in poor areas could lead to even faster transmission, experts say. Countless South Africans continue to pack into commuter trains and minivan taxis. But the annual pilgrimage of the Zion Christian Church, which attracts about 3 million people, was cancelled.

"We have low-income workers who cannot afford to self-isolate or take time off work," said public health expert Dr. Atiya Mosam, who also worried about the large population without clean water or sanitation or vulnerable from HIV or tuberculosis.

A Somali man wears a surgical mask and gloves on the street after after the government announced the closure of schools and universities and banned large gatherings, following the announcement on Monday of the country's first case of the new coronavirus, in the capital Mogadishu, Somalia Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Associated Press

Others asked how a person can self-quarantine in a crowded slum. The continent has several of the world's fastest-growing cities.

Despite widespread calls for "social distancing," a cashier at a popular pharmacy in Johannesburg confided that some customers found it rude when she suggested they swipe their payment cards themselves to limit contact. Elsewhere in the store a shopper determinedly filled a cardboard box with "anti-germ" soap, and hand sanitizer was out of stock despite calls to stop panic buying.

Also Wednesday, sub-Saharan Africa saw its second death from COVID-19, in Burkina Faso, which has one of the continent's highest number of cases but has not imposed measures such as closing borders or banning religious services. Sudan previously reported a death.

In Kenya, police said a man accused of having the coronavirus was beaten to death. A police report obtained by The Associated Press said the man was returning home from a night out Wednesday when a group of youth approached and "took advantage of his drunkenness."

In Ethiopia, the U.S. Embassy noted a rise in anti-foreigner sentiment after cases emerged there. "Reports indicate that foreigners have been attacked with stones, denied transportation services, being spat on, chased on foot, and been accused of being infected with COVID-19," a security alert said.

Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, announced restrictions on the entry of travelers from countries with more than 1,000 coronavirus cases, including China and the U.S., and suspended visas on arrival for their citizens.

Nigeria has had eight cases of the virus, all in people recently arrived from abroad — one of the latest a 6-week-old baby. The country said one of the new patients, an American, had entered via a land border, a first.

Three other African nations announced their first virus cases: Gambia, Zambia and Djibouti. Thirty-three of Africa's 54 countries now have cases, with a total of at least 529 midday Wednesday.

Somalia, which announced its first case this week, closed schools and universities for two weeks and warned against public gatherings as the country with one of Africa's weakest health systems tries to stop the virus' spread.

"This is really a very scary moment," said Hassan Kafi, a medical student in the capital, Mogadishu. The country has suffered from nearly three decades of conflict.

Uganda, which has no cases, banned travel to the worst-affected countries. It also suspended religious gatherings and restricted the number of people at weddings to 10 in a country known for mass ceremonies. ❑

Canada announces massive aid package amid pandemic

By ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday his government is deferring tax payments until August, providing a wage subsidy for small businesses and pausing student loan payments as part of massive stimulus package to limit economic damage from the coronavirus pandemic.

Trudeau said the government is focused on making sure Canadians have the money they need to support their families, buy groceries and pay the rent. Up to $82 billion Canadian (US$56.4 billion) is being spent. The money is about 3% of Canada's gross domestic product.

Trudeau said he will provide employers of small businesses with a temporary wage subsidy equal to 10% of the salary paid to employees for a period of three months. He said that will encourage employers to keep staff on the payroll.

"No matter who you are or what you do, this is a time when you should be focused on your health and that of your neighbors," Trudeau said. "Not whether you're going to lose your job. Not whether you're going to run out of money for things like groceries and medication."

The prime minister said those who have filed their taxes and find out that they owe money will have until August to pay. There will also be six-month, interest-free moratorium on their Canada Student Loans as well as other measures.

Trudeau made the announcement outside his residence, where he is self isolating after his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, tested positive for the virus after returning from a trip to London. Trudeau said she is OK, but is experiencing flu-like symptoms and headaches. He said he and his three children are not showing symptoms.

Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliott said younger people, in their 30s, are becoming seriously ill from the virus, needing ventilators. Elliott said they're seeing that in Ontario and also New York.

Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's top public-health doctor, said to expect the virus to stick around for a long time.

British Columbia and the city of Vancouver declared a state of emergency and Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart threatened to take action if panic buying continues.

"We have seen empty shelves and panic shopping in the last few days. This is unacceptable," Stewart said.

He said all public serving businesses will close except those who can offer take-out and delivery.❑

German leader calls coronavirus biggest challenge since WWII

BERLIN (AP) — Germany has not faced a challenge like the new coronavirus outbreak since World War II and every person in the country must help protect those most vulnerable to illness, Chancellor Angela Merkel said Wednesday night in her first direct televised address to the nation other than her annual New Year's speech,

Merkel, a physicist by training, who has led Germany for over 14 years, said that while researchers are racing to develop a vaccine to prevent infections and medications to treat COID-19, slowing the spread of the virus is currently the only way to minimize the number of people who get sick.

"Let me tell you: This is serious. Take it seriously ,too," Merkel said in a speech aired by several public and private TV stations.

"Germany has an excellent health system, perhaps one of the best in the world," she said. "But our hospitals, too, would be completely overwhelmed if too many patients would be delivered in too short a time."

In this photo provide by the German government, German Chancellor Angela Merkel poses for a photo during the recording of her first direct TV address to the nation in over 14 years in power, at the chancellery in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Associated Press

Germany had 11,973 confirmed virus cases as of Wednesday evening, the fifth-highest number in the world, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Among all the people with the virus in the country, 28 have died, the university's tally said.

Those patients are not just abstract statistics but, "a father or a grandfather, a mother or a grandmother, a partner. They are human beings," the chancellor said. "And we are a community in which every life, every human being, counts."

While updating worldwide infections to more than 214,000 since the new virus emerged, Johns Hopkins University said more than 82,000 people have recovered.

COVID-19 respiratory illness causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough in most people, with severe cases more likely in the elderly and those with existing health problems.

Earlier Wednesday, the German government said it had arranged in coordination with state officials to increase hospital capacities, especially for patients requiring intensive care. ❑

Greek police use tear gas on migrants at Turkish border

By COSTAS KANTOURIS

THESSALONIKI, Greece (AP) — Police on Greece's border with Turkey used tear gas and water cannon Wednesday to repel hundreds of migrants clustered on the Turkish side who attempted to break down a border fence and enter Greece.

The evening clashes took place near the Kastanies border crossing. Greek police said Turkish authorities also fired tear gas at Greek forces, and migrants later lit fires on the Turkish side of the fence.

Similar clashes occurred before dawn Wednesday, lasting for about two hours.

An estimated 2,000 migrants are still camped out on the Greek-Turkish border, weeks after Turkey declared its borders to Europe open and encouraged migrants and refugees living in the country to try crossing into European Union member Greece.

Tens of thousands of people headed to the frontier despite Greece's insistence that its eastern border, which is also the EU's external border, was shut. The move came after months of threats by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he would allow millions of refugees into Europe unless the EU provided more support for refugee care in Turkey.

The EU says it is adhering to a 2016 deal with Turkey under which it provides billions of euros in funds in return for Turkey caring for more than 3.5 million refugees from neighboring Syria.

A riot policeman stands next to a tent as a firefighting vehicle operates in Moria refugee camp on the northeastern Aegean island of Lesbos, Greece, Monday, March 16, 2020.

Associated Press

On Wednesday, Turkey declared that it was closing down its six land and sea border crossings with Greece and Bulgaria in an effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. But a senior Turkish official said that the measure did not amount to an end of Ankara's policy of not preventing migrants from leaving Turkey.

The borders were sealed to people and not the transportation of goods, the official added, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with Turkish government protocol.

The violence on the border came hours after Erdogan held a four-way video conference with the leaders of France, Germany and Britain to discuss the migrants crisis.❑

At least 13 U.S. journalists facing expulsion from China

By KEN MORITSUGU
Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — At least 13 American journalists stand to be expelled from China in retaliation for a new visa limit imposed by the Trump administration on Chinese state-owned media operating in the U.S.

The Chinese government announced Wednesday that Americans working at three major U.S. newspapers would have to surrender their press cards within 10 days. They will all but certainly have to leave the country, as their visas are tied to their media credentials.

The number of affected journalists at the papers — The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post — is at least 13 and could be higher depending on how broadly the group is defined, said the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, or FCCC.

It would be by far the largest expulsion of foreign journalists from China in recent memory.

"There are no winners in the use of journalists as diplomatic pawns by the world's two preeminent economic powers," the FCCC said in a statement.

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang described the move as "necessary countermeasures that China is compelled to take in response to the unreasonable oppression the Chinese media organizations experience in the U.S."

He warned that "if the United States insists on walking farther down the wrong path, China will be forced to take further countermeasures."

The U.S. announced earlier this month that five of China's state-controlled media outlets would be restricted to 100 visas, the de facto expelling of about 60 journalists. It cited increasingly harsh surveillance, harassment and intimidation of American and other foreign journalists working in China.

The outlets employ about 160 Chinese citizens in the U.S. and include the official Xinhua News Agency and China Global Television Network, the overseas arm of state broadcaster CCTV.

Americans at the three newspapers whose credentials expire this year will have to give up their press cards. They will also be barred from working in the semi-autonomous Chinese territories of Hong Kong and Macao, the foreign ministry said.

Until Wednesday's announcement, China had expelled nine foreign journalists since 2013, the FCCC said.

The dramatic step, which shocked foreign journalists in China, is the latest retaliatory move in a series of disputes between Beijing and Washington.

The two sides remain enmeshed in a tariff and trade war despite a recent truce and have traded angry words over the coronavirus pandemic that first emerged in China and has spread worldwide.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club in Hong Kong expressed alarm at the ban on working in the city, which has its own legal system under a "one country, two systems" principle that gives its residents greater freedoms than mainland China.

The Hong Kong immigration department generally determines who can get a journalist visa. "If that system has changed, it would represent a serious erosion of the One Country, Two Systems principle," the FCCHK said in a statement.

The Chinese foreign ministry office in Hong Kong said that the decision falls within the central government's purview over foreign affairs under the principle.

Chinese state media echoed the government line that the U.S. bears responsibility for starting the dispute.

"The impact of the U.S. move will not be limited to the field of media, but will create negative overall effects and new uncertainties to the relationship," the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily newspaper said in an editorial.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo disputed the comparison between the U.S. and Chinese actions, describing the Chinese media companies as propaganda outlets.

"We've identified these as foreign missions under American law," he said.❑

The New York Times Beijing based correspondent Steven Lee Myers, left, chats with other foreign journalists after attending a daily briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing, Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Associated Press

Philippines declares cease-fire with rebels to fight virus

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declared a unilateral cease-fire with communist guerrillas on Wednesday to focus on fighting the coronavirus outbreak that prompted him to place the northern third of the country under quarantine.

Duterte ordered the military and police to stop offensives against New People's Army guerrillas during the cease-fire, which is to start Thursday and end April 15.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano ordered the national police to shift to a defensive posture. He urged the Marxist guerrillas to respond with their own cease-fire.

"We call on them to be a part of the solution in fighting our common enemy, the coronavirus," Ano said in a statement.

"Through this cease-fire, the Philippine government aspires that the swift provision of public health assistance goes unimpeded with the movement of health workers and medical supplies to communities," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said. Duterte launched peace talks with the rebels when he took office in mid-2016. But the negotiations, brokered by the Netherlands, eventually bogged down with both sides accusing the other of continuing to carry out attacks.

Although he has often lashed out at the rebels, Duterte has repeatedly given signs that he is open to resuming negotiations with the rural-based insurgents, estimated by the military to number less than 5,000 nationwide.

The insurgency has raged for more than half a century, making it one of Asia's longest-running rebellions.❑

Commuters go down a military truck as they offer a free ride after public transportation have been halted due to the enhanced community quarantine to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus along an almost empty hi-way in Manila, Philippines on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Associated Press

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Virus death toll spikes in Iran, with total now at 1,135

By NASSER KARIMI and AYA BATRAWY
Associated Press

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran on Wednesday reported its single biggest jump in fatalities from the coronavirus as another 147 people died, raising the country's overall death toll to 1,135.

The nearly 15% spike in deaths — amid a total of 17,361 confirmed cases in Iran — marks the biggest 24-hour rise in fatalities since Iranian officials first acknowledged infections of the virus in mid-February.

Even as the number of cases grows, food markets were still packed with shoppers and highways were crowded as families traveled ahead of the Persian New Year, Nowruz, on Friday.

Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raisi urged the public to avoid travel and crowds, telling Iranians the days ahead represented two "golden weeks" to try curb the virus.

He criticized people for not adhering to the warnings to stay home. "This is not a good situation at all," he said.

President Hassan Rouhani defended his government's response to the outbreak in the face of widespread criticism that Iran acted too slowly and might even have covered up initial cases. He told his Cabinet the government was being "straightforward," saying it announced the outbreak as soon as it learned about it Feb. 19.

"We spoke to people in an honest way. We had no delay," he added.

For weeks, officials implored clerics to shut down crowded Shiite shrines to halt the spread of the virus. The government was only able to close them this week.

"It was difficult, of course, to shut down mosques and holy sites, but we did it. It was a religious duty to do it," Rouhani said.

Iran also said it would close mosques for communal Friday prayers for a third consecutive week. Other Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have done so as well.

The virus, which causes the COVID-19 illness, has infected more than 200,000 people globally and killed more than 8,000. For most people, it causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority recover.

World Health Organization director for the Eastern Mediterranean region, Ahmed Al-Mandhari, said the many travel restrictions imposed by various countries are hurting efforts to combat the virus by delaying both the deployment of health experts and the delivery of urgently needed medical supplies.

Millions across the Middle East were under curfews, quarantines or almost total lockdowns.

In Egypt, the Hilton Green Plaza hotel in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria was quarantined after a British guest showed symptoms. A hotel employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to talk to the press, declined to say how many people were in the hotel but added the Health Ministry gave foreign guests the option of leaving to return to their home countries before a suspension of all flights goes into effect Thursday.

Egypt, which has reported nearly 200 cases and six deaths from the virus, has also quarantined more than 300 families in a Nile Delta village, and imposed a lockdown in the Red Sea resort town of Hurghada. All workers at hotels and tourist sites in Sharm el-Sheikh, Luxor and Aswan were ordered to self quarantine for 14 days.

In the capital of Cairo, coffee shops and restaurants were closed in the city of over 20 million, with plainclothes security forces telling people to go home.

In this photo released by the official website of the Office of the Iranian Presidency, cabinet members wearing face masks and gloves attend their meeting in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Associated Press

"I am financially ruined. How can I earn my living now?" said Mohammed Gamal, a worker in a coffee shop that was shut down.

In Israel, which reported 427 infections, authorities put the country in near-shutdown mode, ordering tens of thousands into home quarantine, turning unused hotels into hospitals and setting up drive-through testing centers. Most controversially, the government instructed the shadowy Shin Bet internal security service to deploy phone surveillance technology to track movements of those infected.

Israel's Population and Immigration Authority said it was barring entry to all foreign nationals. It was also closing its land borders to exits by Israeli nationals.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh announced a halt to all movement out of Bethlehem and two neighboring towns with coronavirus cases and urged Bethlehem residents to stay home starting Wednesday night. Palestinians also were instructed not to work in Israeli settlements or enter Israel starting Sunday.

In Iraq, a week-long curfew began in Baghdad, allowing pedestrians on the streets only to buy necessary food and medicine. Armed police patrolled the city and set up roadblocks. Some Iraqis flouted the curfew by reopening shops and taking family strolls. Some grocery stands and bakeries stayed open, but many appeared to be obeying the curfew. Iraq has had 11 deaths among 154 confirmed cases.❑

In Mexico, a cartel is taking over: Jalisco New Generation

By MARK STEVENSON

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's fastest-rising cartel, the Jalisco New Generation gang, has a reputation for ruthlessness and violence unlike any since the fall of the old Zetas cartel. In parts of the country it is fighting medieval-style battles, complete with fortified redoubts, to expand nationwide, from the outskirts of Mexico City, into the tourist resorts around Cancun, and along the northern border.

Jalisco so likes violence and heavy armament that U.S. prosecutors said its operatives tried to buy belt-fed M-60 machine guns in the United States, and once brought down a Mexican military helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade.

But Jalisco is also mounting a propaganda campaign, using videos and social media to threaten rivals while promising civilians that it won't prey on them with extortion and kidnappings. It is a promise that cartels in Mexico have long made, and always broken. But Jalisco's onslaught is so powerful that the cartel appears to have convinced some Mexicans, especially those who are tired of local gangs, to accept control by one large, powerful cartel.

"It seems like the Jalisco New Generation group is taking over everywhere," said a priest in the western city of Apatzingan. "It seems like they allow people to work, and they don't prey on civilians, they don't kidnap, they don't steal vehicles, they just go about their drug business."

The priest, who is not being identified to prevent reprisals, would rather not have any gang in town. But one of his parishioners was recently kidnapped, raped and killed by members of a local gang, the Viagras, even after her family paid a ransom; locals are so sick of that gang they'd rather have anybody else move in.

He is not the only one. A restaurant owner in the central state of Guanajuato — where Jalisco is fighting for control with the local Santa Rosa de Lima gang — says he would prefer that Jalisco take over, because of the local gang's chaotic ways.

"Things are quieter when Jalisco is around," said the restaurant owner, who also asked his name not be used.

A woman who has lived for years under Jalisco cartel rule in a small town says she seeks out local Jalisco enforcers to solve common crime problems. "If you have a problem, you go to them. They solve it quickly," she said.

It is all a lie, albeit one that the cartel likes to repeat.

"Beautiful people, continue your routine," the cartel said in a banner hung from an overpass in 2019 to reassure residents of Apatzingan, Michoacán, that the cartel was moving in to kick out the Viagras. Beneath and around the banner a total of 19 corpses hung from ropes, lay piled on the roadway or were scattered, hacked to pieces.

Sofia Huett, the head security official in the central state of Guanajuato, has been on the receiving end of what she calls a propaganda war between Jalisco and the Santa Rosa gang.

"What is striking is the propaganda campaign in all media. What we are seeing today, we haven't seen" since Mexico's 2006-2012 drug war, she said, referring to decapitation videos, threats, and social media messages warning people to stay indoors.

"This propaganda doesn't just seek to intimidate rivals, but the whole population, as well," she said. "I would even say there may be political goals behind this type of messages."

To those lured by the promises of the cartel, Huett said: "We cannot leave the public in doubt about the criminals, these false promises of protection and these false promises of well-being. This always ends badly."

Indeed, the reality of life under the Jalisco cartel is terrifying: the cartel has made the city of Guadalajara and surrounding suburbs into a giant clandestine grave site.

Hundreds of bodies have been found in the last year, dumped in drainage canals, buried in fields and the patios and yards of homes. Bodies have been found dissolved in acid or lye, bodies have been found in plastic bags. So many bodies have been found in Guadalajara that authorities ran out of space at the morgue and took to moving rotting bodies around in refrigerated trucks until neighbors complained about the smell. Experts say the killings skyrocketed after the cartel lost control of its local organization in Guadalajara, and has been battling that splinter group.

Jalisco is accustomed to attacking law enforcement directly. The cartel is blamed for two of the worst attacks in recent memory: in October, cartel gunmen ambushed and killed 14 state police officers in Michoacán, and there are indications they executed some with gunshots to the head. In 2015, cartel gunmen trying to protect their leader shot down a Mexican military helicopter with an RPG.

Jalisco likes quasi-military tactics, and their hitmen favor military camouflage. In southern Guerrero state, they welded thick armor plating to a truck to make a homemade tank. In many states, they parade around in convoys of dozens of pickup trucks openly marked with the letters "CJNG."

Jalisco really only understands force, a tactic that Mexico's government has sidelined. On Friday, the foreign relations department wrote that the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador "is committed to eliminating inequality and violence by ending the war on drugs ... the use of force is no longer the first option."

Indeed, López Obrador said his administration no longer seeks to detain drug lords.

Meanwhile, many of Jalisco's front-line battlegrounds look almost medieval.

On the border between Jalisco and Michoacán states, there is a town called Tepalcatepec, a stronghold of the Viagras that Jalisco has recently tried to take over. The road in from Jalisco — the main route of attack — is blocked with piles of dirt and rocks staggered in a zigzag pattern, forcing incoming vehicles to slow down. From a house on a nearby hill, a vigilante with a .50-caliber sniper rifle scans the road, ready to fire.

Farther south in Michoacán, in the hamlet of El Terrero, Jalisco controls the south bank of the Rio Grande river, while the north bank remains in the hands of the rival New Michoacán Family cartel and its armed wing, the Viagras. The other gangs' terror of Jalisco is evident; in September, they hijacked and burned a half-dozen trucks and buses to block the bridge over the river, to prevent Jalisco convoys from entering in a surprise assault.

Nearby, in the township of San Jose de Chila, rival gangs used a church as an armed redoubt to fight off an offensive by Jalisco gunmen. Holed up in the church tower and from its roof, they tried to defend the town against the incursion, leaving the church filled with bullet holes.

One thing is clear: Jalisco wants people to know that they're in town. They hang banners from overpasses announcing their arrival, offering cash rewards for enemies and threatening police. They post videos on social media, usually with a few dozen heavily-armed, camouflage-clad men with helmets in the background, announcing they have come to "clean up the town."❑

In this Feb. 10, 2020 photo, National Guard patrol vehicles drive through the central square, in Apaseo el Alto, Guanajuato state, Mexico.

Associated Press

CENTRALE BANK VAN ARUBA

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

In consideration of the immense impact of the COVID-19 on the global economy and most recently Aruba, as well as the unprecedented measures taken to foremost mitigate the risks to public health and the associated effect on the Aruban economy, the Central Bank of Aruba (CBA) makes the following statement.

Firstly and most importantly, the CBA has always implemented a strict monetary policy to maintain confidence in the Aruban florin. To this end, to safeguard the peg of the Aruban florin to the US dollar, ample international reserves have been built up throughout the years, that can withstand a period of low volumes of incoming foreign currency, emanating from the lock-out of inbound tourist travel that is currently in effect.

Secondly, over the years the CBA has executed a stringent prudential policy and affirms that the Aruban banking sector is solid, having ample capital and liquidity buffers to withstand significant external shocks. As such the commercial banks are able to continue with the execution of their core functions under current stressed conditions.

In order to further shore up confidence in the Aruban florin and to preserve the soundness and stability of the banking sector, as of March 17, 2020 the CBA has taken several additional measures in the monetary, prudential, and foreign exchange domains to protect the international reserves, as well as to amplify the commercial banks' liquidity and loss-absorption capacity.

Monetary measures

One of the most important monetary instruments of the CBA is the reserve requirement, which is used to mop up from or inject liquidity into the banking sector. The reserve requirement in effect for the commercial banks has been reduced by 1.0 percentage point to 11.0 percent, thereby expanding the free liquidity of the commercial banks that can be used for granting loans and meeting additional liquidity demands from their clients.

Prudential measures

In order to increase the commercial banks' loss absorbing capacity as well as their ability to continue and to increase their lending under the current stressed conditions, the CBA has taken the following immediate actions:

- A decrease of the minimum Capital Adequacy Ratio from 16 percent to 14 percent.
- A decrease of the Prudential Liquidity Ratio from 18 to 15 percent.
- An increase of the maximum allowed Loan-to-Deposit Ratio from 80 percent to 85 percent.

Foreign exchange measures

As of today, the CBA will not grant any new foreign exchange licenses that relate to outgoing capital transactions, including dividend declarations. Subsequently, the Notice concerning Foreign Exchange Transaction 02/K.1 is no longer applicable for outgoing capital transactions. This includes also requests for outgoing capital and dividend transactions that have been submitted to the CBA but not yet processed.

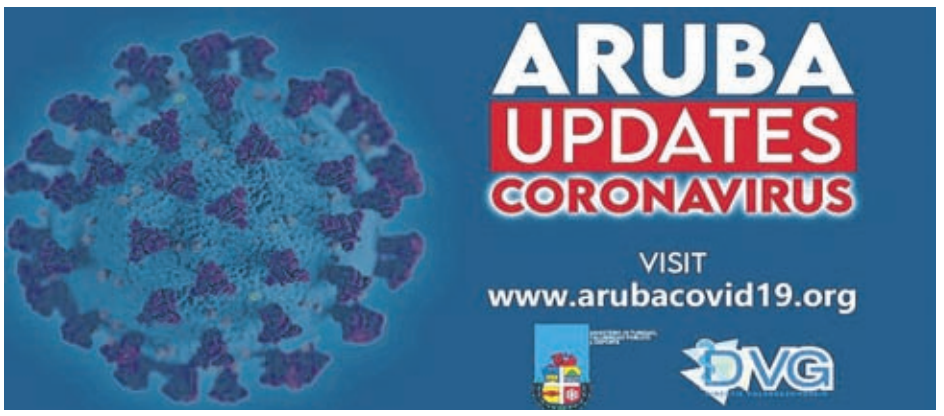
All foreign exchange licenses that have been previously granted by the CBA remain in effect, including for loan and interest repayments. Furthermore, all current transactions, as mentioned in article 9, paragraph 2, of the State Ordinance Foreign Exchange Transactions, can continue to be executed without a special foreign exchange license of the CBA.

If needed, the CBA stands ready to take further measures to preserve the peg of the Aruban florin to the US dollar and to maintain the soundness and solidity of the banking sector under stressed conditions.

Jeanette R. Semeleer
President

March 17, 2020

Crisis measures by the Government of Aruba in connection with Coronavirus COVID-19



ORANJESTAD – The 4th case of a person tested positive has been confirmed, it is a tourist from the US. All four cases are import and there has been no local transmission. All those in contact with the confirmed patients have been contacted and screened/quarantined. At this moment (article written March 18, 5.44pm) we have 125 persons in quarantine. Tests are only performed when symptoms show.

In connection with the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Aruba took the following crisis measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- All establishments, shops, restaurants and businesses must close at 8:00 pm
- All public events are canceled till March 31, 2020. This entails all government activities and all private activities that received a police permit.
- Residents that return to Aruba must self-quarantine for 2 weeks.
- **As per Tuesday, March 17, 2020, till March 31, 2020, the entry of travelers (inbound flights) will be restricted, except for legal residents and cargo.** Contact number for residents of Aruba stuck abroad (because of the border closure): **+297 569-6897**.
- Since March 14, 2020, the Queen Beatrix International Airport elevated its control on flights arriving from other countries that do not fall under the travel restriction. **Check your airline whether their flight schedule changes or flights are suspended.**
- Schools are closed until March 31st. This measure applies to schools, daycare centers, and all organizations that are in charge of the education and care of our children.
- Visits at nursing homes are prohibited.
- Government departments will operate with minimal staffing
- There will be no public church services and also added no funerals with more than 10 people

Prevention

- Wash your hands as frequently as possible with soap for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid physical contact, greet one another without shaking hands, hugging or kissing.
- If you are sick, STAY home. For more information call the free number +297 280-0101.

For the latest updates you may contact the Facebook page of the Department of Health and/or check the website Arubacovid.org. ❑

Some facts

- Transmission of the Corona virus happens when the air -- along with saliva and mucus -- is forced out of your mouth and nose, when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- This air with saliva and mucus cannot transport itself for more than a meter. That is why we have to maintain our distance from others.
- As long as a person does not have the CORONAVIRUS symptoms he or she is not contagious and does not need to be tested. Because: 1) Without sufficient virus in the body someone does not cough nor sneeze. 2) And without the cough or sneeze someone cannot spread the virus.
- This is the criteria of WHO and CDC and the Aruba Department of Public Health will adhere.❑

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood!

Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: Hook and Cook your Own Fish!

Oranjestad- Rennaissance Marina Downtown is home to the Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood. Herby senior and Herby Junior both share a passion and love for fishing. They know what the local waters have to offer and what fresh fish really means. Over 30 years ago, the idea for the fishing charter was born.

Captain Herby would catch the fish to be served at the restaurant the same day. That concept still lives, what is 'hooked' during the day is cooked in the evening at the restaurant.

Herby shares his experience with his crew, who take out guests daily on their tournament rigged 35ft twin engine Bertram "Driftwood" or on their more spacious 37ft twin engine Bertram called "Living Easy". Both yachts are available for charters from 8am to 12 noon, or from 1 to 5pm (6-hour trips also available). To book a fishing charter visit www.driftwoodfishingcharters.com or call Herbert direct at (297)-5924040.

Have an authentic seafood dining experience at Driftwood Restaurant, situated in the characteristic downtown Oranjestad. This comfortable downtown restaurant has a long tradition (30 years) of serving the freshest fish, the biggest shrimp, and the most succulent Caribbean Lobster.

Opening Hours: 5:00pm to 10.30pm (closed on Sundays)

For reservations visit www.driftwoodaruba.com or call (297)-5832515

Address: Klipstraat 12. Oranjestad, Aruba

Aruba to Me

ORANJESTAD – Aruba Today likes to welcome readers to participate in our newspaper. You can see that in our Honored Guest-publications, specials like on Valentine's Day and on other occasions. Throughout the year you are always welcome to send us your vacation picture(s) together with completing the sentence: Aruba to me is …….. (Email: news@arubatoday.com)

For today's newspaper we received a great picture from **Mary and Don Alhart**, US. They wrote:

"Aruba to us is wonderful memories of spending our honeymoon on "One Happy Island"- 50 years ago- in January, of 1970. We were here -last week- planning our family celebration- when we had to shorten our vacation and return home when the borders closed because of the Coronavirus. We still plan to return to the Marriott Surf Club with our children and grandchildren-in August - to celebrate our Golden Anniversary and share a place which is so very special to us. It was sad to leave -so abruptly on Monday of this week. We look forward to returning to our "Home away from Home"— for many more years to come."

(Picture taken at Barefoot Restaurant on Sunday evening, March 15, 2020). ❑

NOW: Peru's Rotisserie Chicken for take-out

EAGLE BEACH — "With the development of the corona virus (COVID-19) we are faced with a pandemic which means a greater risk of exposure for our employees and guests alike.

In the light of this concern we are closing Asi es mi Peru and The Kitchen Table as of March 18 till April 7, 2020,' informs owner of Asi Es Mi Peru restaurant Jan van Nes. However, their soft and juicy Peruvian roasted chicken is now offered for a great price to take-out. This is not your ordinary fast food chicken, but a high-quality, finger-licking dish accompanied by fries and salad. Try it and support our local restaurant at the same time.

Las Brasas Peruanas is the new kid on the block, part of the restaurant, Asi es mi Peru, at Paradise Beach Villas. Offering authentic Peruvian roasted chicken that gives you a mouthwatering experience, moreover because this is a dish prepared with love by the Peruvian chef, presented with pride by the Peruvian owner Roxana van Nes and her Dutch-Surinam husband Jan. You will encounter soft and juicy meat, a crispy skin and that special taste because of a 24-hour marinade_ a must-try.

"Pollo a la Brasa, roasted chicken, is a very popular dish in Peru and the first thing my wife does when she visits her home country is paying a visit to Pardos, a well-known chicken rotisserie in Lima. She realized she never found a place like this on the island of Aruba", says Jan.

"The seasoning makes the difference and when it lacks the chicken will be dry and without taste. That was our motivation to bring our own charcoal burning rotisserie from Peru, eco-friendly as it traps heat and steam internally meaning there is no smoke." In the United States roasted chicken is a popular dish, now visitors can have a taste of their favorite home-dish, but with the Peruvian twist.

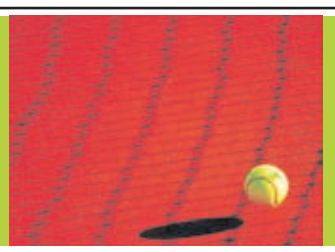
Take it all out

"Our chicken is marinated 24 hours in a special mix of Peruvian herbs and spices including garlic, cumin and Peruvian pepper and roasted for one hour and 10 minutes while preserving its full flavor. Another important element of our newest product is that the price is a bargain right now." It is ideal for families with children, kids love roasted chicken. Normally it comes with a fresh garden salad and fries, but we offer as well 'chaufa' (Peru's version of Chinese Fried Rice) and other side dishes. There will be more surprises in the future. Original combos with Inca cola, very well-known in Peru, are on the menu. We just opened and we already sense that it is a niche we found." To make the happy take-out meal complete there is home-made ice-cream, for sure a hit with the little ones.

A family-oriented restaurant is what Asi es mi Peru strives for, and with this extra value of delicious roasted chicken they make this a fact.

For more information check the Facebook page: AsíEsMiPerú or website www.asiesmiperuenaruba.com.❑

SPORTS



New normal: MLB adjusts to coronavirus uncertainty

By DAVID BRANDT
AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Major league teams adjusted to their strange new normal, with more players returning to their hometowns as they realized baseball won't be played for months.

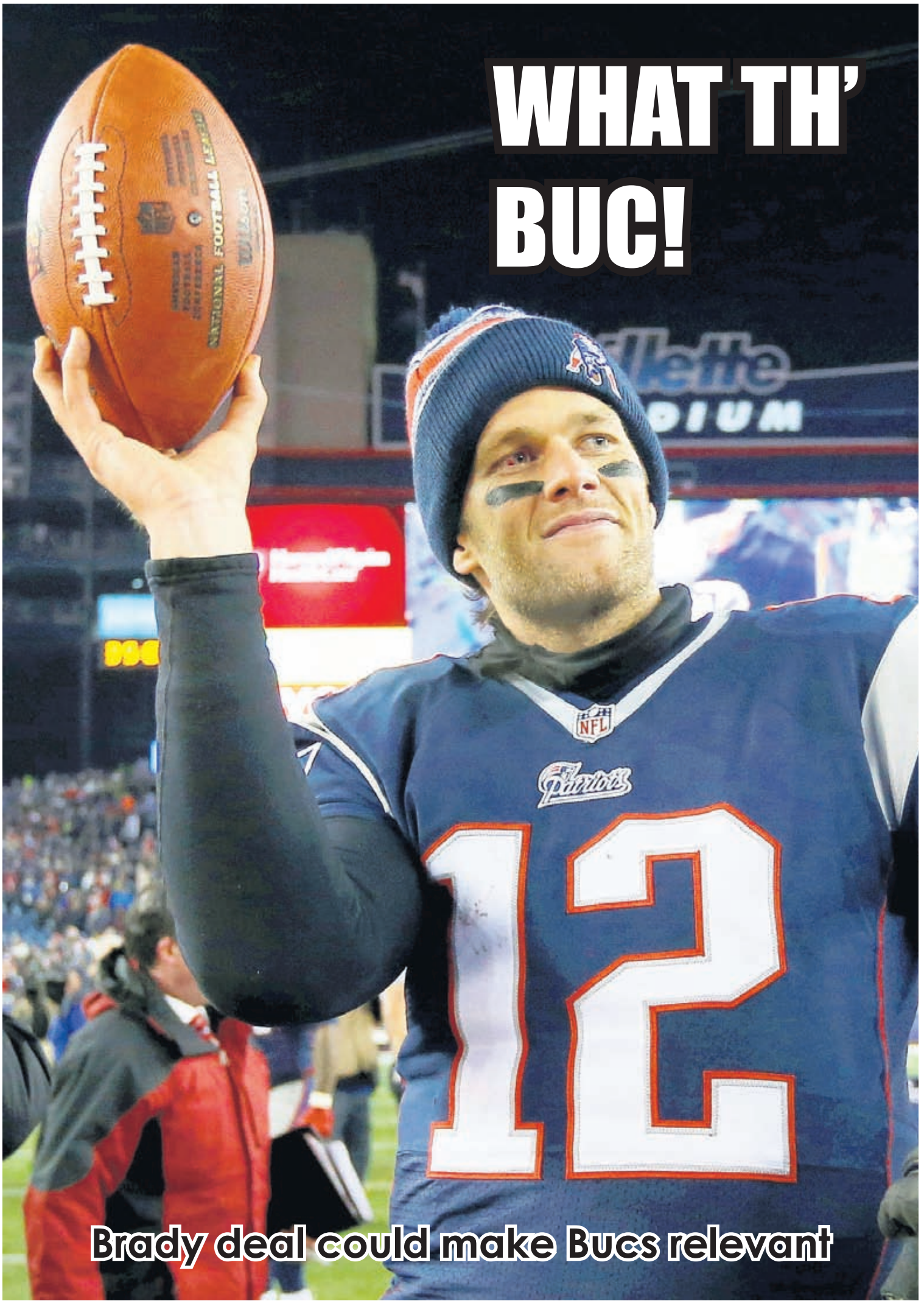
Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said he feels like he's "playing hooky" every day as the world fights the new coronavirus pandemic that caused postponement of opening day until at least mid-May.

"My heart knows where it's supposed to be," Lovullo said Tuesday. "But my head is saying we've got a bigger cause that's right in front of us. It's still something that we are all getting used to."

Major League Baseball responded to the players' association on Tuesday, two days following the union's counteroffer on issues such as salaries, major league service time, performance bonuses, opt outs and the amateur draft. Baseball's current collective bargaining agreement runs through 2021, and the chaos has increased the possibility of talks leading to a modified deal with a later expiration.

Houston ace Justin Verlander had surgery on his right groin and is expected to be out about six weeks, which could make him available for the delayed opening day. Verlander dealt with the problem early in spring training. His first start was delayed until March 3 because of discomfort in the same area.

Continued on page 19



In this Jan. 10, 2015, file photo, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady holds up the game ball after an NFL divisional playoff football game against the Baltimore Ravens in Foxborough, Mass.

Associated Press

Page 20

Doping tests around the world wind down because of virus

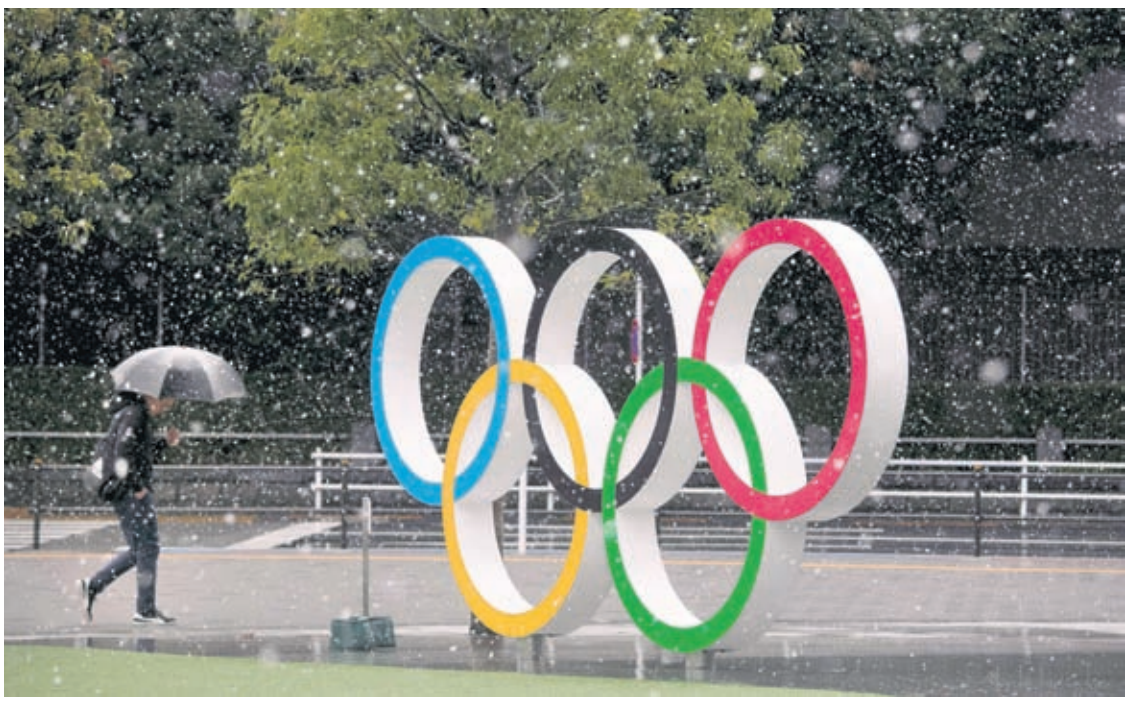
By JAMES ELLINGWORTH
DÜSSELDORF, Germany (AP) — Although anti-doping organizations around the world are dialing back on testing because of the coronavirus outbreak, Olympic athletes can still expect a knock on the door.

The International Olympic Committee has said it remains "fully committed" to opening the Tokyo Games on July 24, so testers are still visiting some athletes at a time when many people are trying to avoid social contact.

"Starting immediately, testing done by USADA will be focused only upon mission-critical testing of those in sports still competing and as needed for those preparing for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games," Travis Tygart, the CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, said in a video statement announcing cuts to its testing program.

The National Anti-Doping Agency of Germany is also cutting its testing, and signaled that calling off the Olympics would allow it to cut further.

"As the Olympic and Paralympic Games have so far not been canceled or postponed, it is important that the athletes have a fair chance of Tokyo. This also includes the necessary doping controls and the pre-Olympic test program," the German agency said.



Snow falls on the Olympic rings near the New National Stadium in Tokyo, Saturday, March 14, 2020.

Britain and Austria's agencies have also announced significant reductions.

The Russian anti-doping agency, known as RUSADA, said it is still running a full program of out-of-competition tests despite having its office staff work from home.

"Actually, we haven't reduced yet, but I suppose we will have to," RUSADA deputy CEO Margarita Pakhnotskaya told The Associated Press in a text message on Wednesday.

Various agencies have said they will respect an athlete's wish to self-isolate but different countries require different types of proof.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks. Those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

Doping tests are split into two main categories. Athletes are tested at competitions, so when events are canceled — including most remaining Olympic qualifiers — it naturally means a drop in testing. Athletes also have to give regular updates on their whereabouts to allow surprise testing out of competition, often at home or a training camp.

The slowdown at the world's anti-doping agencies could also affect efforts to sanction athletes who test positive for banned substances.

WBA welterweight boxing champion Alexander Besputin tested positive in December after a title fight in Monaco. A second sample was due to be tested in France on Tuesday but that was canceled amid the virus outbreak, he told Russian state news agency Tass. Besputin, a Russian who fights out of California, denies any wrongdoing.

The World Anti-Doping Agency doesn't have an overall policy on when agencies can wind down testing and other activities. It says it is monitoring the situation and will share information about "an absence or diminished level of testing on athletes in areas of higher risk" with bodies including the IOC and the International Paralympic Committee.

"WADA is prioritizing the health and safety of its staff and doing its part to prevent the spread of COVID-19," WADA said in an e-mailed statement.❑

Kerr says USA Basketball still planning for Tokyo 2020

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

The USA Basketball coaching staff for the Tokyo Olympics is still preparing as if there will be a gold medal to try and defend this summer, even in highly uncertain times caused by the global coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. men's assistant coach Steve Kerr, the coach of the Golden State Warriors, said on a conference call Tuesday that he has had some recent contact with U.S. head coach Gregg Popovich of the San Antonio Spurs as plans for the Olympics continue.

Kerr is slated to be on a staff that also includes Atlanta Hawks coach Lloyd Pierce and Villanova coach Jay Wright. Those were the three assistants under Popovich last summer as well at the Basketball World Cup in China.

Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr gestures toward an official during the first half of his team's NBA basketball game against the Toronto Raptors in San Francisco, Thursday, March 5, 2020.

Associated Press

"Everything's just up in the air," Kerr said. "There's no sense of whether things are going to be delayed or anything. We're all kind of wondering what's going to happen and so is the rest of the world."

The Olympics are scheduled to start July 24. The International Olympic Committee said Tuesday that the uncertainty of things right now is "an unprecedented situation for the whole world."

"The IOC remains fully committed to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and with more than four months to go before the Games there is no need for any drastic decisions at this stage," the IOC said, adding that any other "speculation at this moment would be counter-productive."

USA Basketball revealed last month a list of 44 players — most of the league's biggest American stars among them and 15 of the 16 U.S.-born NBA All-Stars from this season — who are under consideration for the Olympic team.

The original plan was to pick a 12-player roster by early June, and for that team to gather in Las Vegas in early July to begin training camp.

Officially, no part of that plan has changed yet. Like the NBA and the rest of the sports world, USA Basketball is very much in wait-and-see mode.

"We're just going to plan as if it's going to happen and we're going to try to put together a roster," Kerr said. "That's all we can do."❑

Continued from page 17

As Yankees manager Aaron Boone started driving home from spring training in Tampa, Florida, to Connecticut, New York announced a second minor league player tested positive for coronavirus. They are the only two known baseball players who have tested positive.

"While under self-quarantine, the player reported fatigue and an elevated body temperature to Yankees medical personnel," the Yankees said in a statement. "The test was administered on Sunday, and the player returned to self-quarantine following the positive results.

"We can also report that within the past 48 hours his symptoms have dissipated."

Lovullo said about half of his big-league roster remains in the Arizona, though the D-backs have the advantage of being based in Phoenix, so several players also live there during the offseason. He said those who remain are coming into the team's facility in shifts no larger than four or five in an effort to make sure social distancing protocols are followed.

He said there's also a "skeleton staff" of team personnel assisting players.

"We're making sure that as people are moving around the facility that there's a lot of space between everybody and the area is being cleaned as soon as those people move on," Lovullo said.

Lovullo said he hasn't been at the facility because he's had an eye infection and his son just had his tonsils removed. He's passing the time by watching movies, playing cards with his wife, checking the news and fighting boredom. He added that it's important everyone follows recommendations to fight the spread of coronavirus and that his family is no different.

"I've gone from level 45 on my landscape app game to like level 295," Lovullo said. "So I'm sitting around, doing nothing, just like everyone else."

He said the team instructed pitchers to ramp down their activities.

Lovullo also said he didn't know of any major surgeries D-backs players would have now that there will be at least two months until opening day. He said the team is encouraging players to stay in shape, but "we're not getting after it, if that's what you're asking. We're really pulling back."

Some of the big league Yankees have stayed in Florida to work out, but more may go home soon, including reliever Zack Britton. He said now that players know there's going to be at least a two-month break, many might head home for at least a few weeks.

"You don't want to just consistently be training at a really, really high level when we're not going to start action again until another two months or so," Britton said. "You want to be healthy. It's going to be tricky."

MLB's teams have pledged $30 million for ballpark workers who will lose income because of the delay to the season.

"Over the past 48 hours, I have been approached by representatives of all 30 clubs to help assist the thousands of ballpark employees affected by the delay," MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. "Motivated by desire to help some of the most valuable members of the baseball community, each club has committed $1 million."

Many ballpark employees are paid by the game and will not have that income during the delay. If the schedule is cut, their income likely would be reduced.

"Our game-day staff are the familiar faces that our fans know and love," Tampa Bay Rays president Brian Auld said. "They are part of the fabric of the ballpark experience at Tropicana Field, and they are an essential part of our operations."❑

Arizona Diamondbacks starting pitcher Madison Bumgarner (40) talks with manager Torey Lovullo, right, after leaving a spring training baseball game after pitching a shutout into the fourth inning against the Kansas City Royals, Monday, March 9, 2020, in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Associated Press

Brady leaving Patriots, says 'football journey' is elsewhere

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
AP Sports Writer

For two decades, Tom Brady was the face of the Patriots, and even of the NFL. When he turns 43 in August, his home address no longer will be in New England.

The six-time Super Bowl champion plans to keep playing. But the centerpiece of the Patriots' dynasty, the most successful quarterback in league history, says he is leaving the only pro team he has ever known.

Brady's representatives were in serious talks with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Brady posted Tuesday on social media "my football journey will take place elsewhere."

In this Jan. 4, 2020, file photo, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady warms up before an NFL wild-card playoff football game against the Tennessee Titans in Foxborough, Mass.
Associated Press

The comments were the first to indicate the Patriots icon would leave New England. Statements later by team owner Robert Kraft and coach Bill Belichick made it clear that Brady's remarkable stint there is over.

In a two-part message, Brady thanked the Patriots and the fans and said "FOREVER A PATRIOT."

"I don't know what my football future holds, but it is time for me to open a new stage for my life and my career," he wrote. "Although my football journey will take place elsewhere, I appreciate everything that we have achieved and am grateful for our incredible TEAM experiences."

The one-year contract Brady signed before last season expires Wednesday afternoon, and his agent could negotiate a deal with another team on Tuesday, though it can't be official yet. He will count $13.5 million toward New England's salary cap due to the signing bonus money he received in 2019. Kraft said of Brady: "I had hoped this day would never come, but rather that Tom would end his remarkable career in a Patriots uniform after yet another Super Bowl championship. Unfortunately, the two sides were unable to reach an agreement to allow that dream to become a reality. While sad today, the overwhelming feeling I have is appreciation for his countless contributions to our team and community."

A four-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player and three-time league MVP, Brady has been the enduring face of the Patriots during a run that added another layer to Boston's already rich sports history. Only Bill Russell, who won 11 NBA championship rings in the 1950s and '60s with the Celtics, has won more titles as a member of one of New England's four major professional sports teams.

Brady would be the oldest starting quarterback in the league at 43 at the beginning of next season. The Colts, Buccaneers, Chargers and Dolphins are among the teams expected to be in a Brady derby.

"TB12," as he has been dubbed, a nod to his 2017 book detailing his diet and exercise approach, arguably is coming off his worst non-injury season. He threw for 4,057 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2019, with eight interceptions. But he completed fewer than 56% of his passes six times in the final eight games of the year, including a season-ending loss to Miami that cost the Patriots a first-round playoff bye.

They lost at home to the Titans in the wild-card round, Brady's earliest postseason exit in a decade — and likely his last game in a Patriots uniform.

Brady had a one-year contract for 2019 that paid him $23 million, placing him 10th among starting quarterbacks. It was the latest renegotiation by Brady to help give the Patriots salary cap flexibility to fill out the roster. The chief decision-maker in player personnel decisions, Belichick hasn't been shy about moving on from players he felt were past their prime or seeking contracts that exceeded value in relation to their age. Belichick has severed ties with players much younger than Brady during his time in New England.

"Nothing about the end of Tom's Patriots career changes how unfathomably spectacular it was," said Belichick, whose current quarterback is untested second-year player Jarrett Stidham. "With his relentless competitiveness and longevity, he earned everyone's adoration and will be celebrated forever. It has been a privilege to coach Tom Brady for 20 years."❑

Free agent deals can't be official even as NFL year begins

By BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

Free agent contracts and trades agreed upon in recent days or weeks won't become official even as the NFL's league year has begun Wednesday.

That also means free agents involved won't be getting paid until those deals are signed and physicals are taken. The NFL has barred travel to team facilities by free agents and also has banned team personnel from traveling to meet with players as a safeguard against the new coronavirus.

Several people familiar with a memo the league sent to the 32 teams on Tuesday night tell The Associated Press that while teams can announce reaching agreements with free agents or concluding trades, nothing is official. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the information has not been made public by the NFL or the teams.

Although information on dozens of contract agreements and a slew of trades has been leaked, teams were not allowed to complete the deals until the 4 p.m. EDT Wednesday start of the 2020 NFL business year. However, all of those transactions now come with the caveat that the signings and physicals need to occur.

Of course, if a club drafts a contract and sends it digitally to a player, he can sign it remotely and send it back to the team. Then teams must submit it to the league and that would constitute official signing. But few, if any, teams would be willing to do that without conducting a physical.

Those physicals can be gotten locally by players. Many teams have expressed being uncomfortable with such an arrangement.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus.

Among the players moving in free agency in one of the busiest years of action are such stars as Tom Brady, Philip Rivers and Jason Witten. While they certainly can afford to wait for everything to become official, it's a strange dynamic in what, of course, is a strange time.

The NFL has delayed the offseason schedule of practices amid the uncertainty — meetings and organized team activities (OTAs) would have begun in April. Becoming familiar with new surroundings, teammates and coaching staffs for the likes of veterans Brady, Rivers and Witten — who collectively spent 52 years with their original teams — and the dozens of other players changing addressed must wait.❑

NASCAR tackling how to reschedule races, keep teams afloat

By JENNA FRYER

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — NASCAR plans to reschedule the seven Cup Series races already postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Figuring out how to cram the events and the All-Star race into the crowded 36-race schedule could be difficult.

NASCAR has already postponed its season until May 9 at Martinsville Speedway in Virginia. IndyCar suspended its start to the season through the end of April last week, while Formula One has postponed or canceled several events, including last weekend's opener in Australia.

"These clearly are unprecedented times with information changing by the hour," NASCAR President Steve Phelps said Tuesday. "Collectively, our industry has made several difficult decisions, all with one thought in mind -- the health and safety of our fans, our competitors, employees and everyone in the industry. The situation we are facing transcends the world of sports. What is most important now is we take precautions to keep everyone as safe as possible during these challenging times."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus within a few weeks.

In this Nov. 18, 2018, file photo, Denny Hamlin, left, leads the pack at the start of the NASCAR Cup Series championship auto race at Homestead-Miami Speedway, in Homestead, Fla.

Associated Press

Motorsports is in a particularly perilous position without weekly racing because of its financial structure. Teams must find the sponsorship needed to field each car, pay drivers, make payroll for an entire organization and cover additional operating costs. With no events scheduled until May, sponsors may ask for refunds and teams won't be collecting payouts from purses.

Roger Penske, who in January became owner of IndyCar and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, promised team owners they will receive the first installment payment from the series' bonus program as planned. Phelps said NASCAR is still working through those issues.

"We are working with our teams closely to have them industry wide make sure we are all financially viable moving forward during this postponement of our races," Phelps said. "Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are. We want to make sure that each of our teams gets through this, each of our stakeholders in the industry gets through this crisis as well as we all can."

As for rescheduling the postponed events -- at Atlanta, Homestead-Miami, Texas Motor Speedway, Bristol (Tenn.), Richmond (Va.), Talladega (Ala.) and Dover (Del.) – Phelps said all options are under consideration. That includes midweek races and doubleheaders.

NASCAR does want the postponed events concluded before the start of its playoffs in September, still wants the season to end as planned at Phoenix in November and isn't sure if it will race during a planned break during the Tokyo Olympics, as requested by broadcast partner NBC Sports. The Olympics are currently scheduled to open in late July.

"It's understanding the races that we've had to postpone and what is the best way to get them fit back into a schedule," Phelps said. "Will it be a crowded landscape, television landscape, with a lot of different sports on? Yes, it's going to be. I think, again, we'll work with our television partners to find the appropriate windows so we can get back racing and make sure our fans get the opportunity to see that racing."

NASCAR has eased the financial burden on teams by banning car tests for now, including time spent in wind tunnels or on manufacturer-owned simulators.

Phelps also sent a letter to fans that stressed the series hopes to return to racing in May.

"It's the thrill of the race that attracts us to NASCAR and makes us all fans," Phelps wrote. "But as we look broadly at the coronavirus situation that is rapidly developing in our country and abroad, what is important now is bigger than the world of sports, and we must focus on everyone's safety and well-being. ... NASCAR appreciates your support and we look forward to going green."❑

Earnhardt, Busch sign on for NASCAR esports series

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Dale Earnhardt Jr., Kyle Busch and other NASCAR drivers have signed on to race in an exhibition esports series while their cars are kept off the tracks amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.

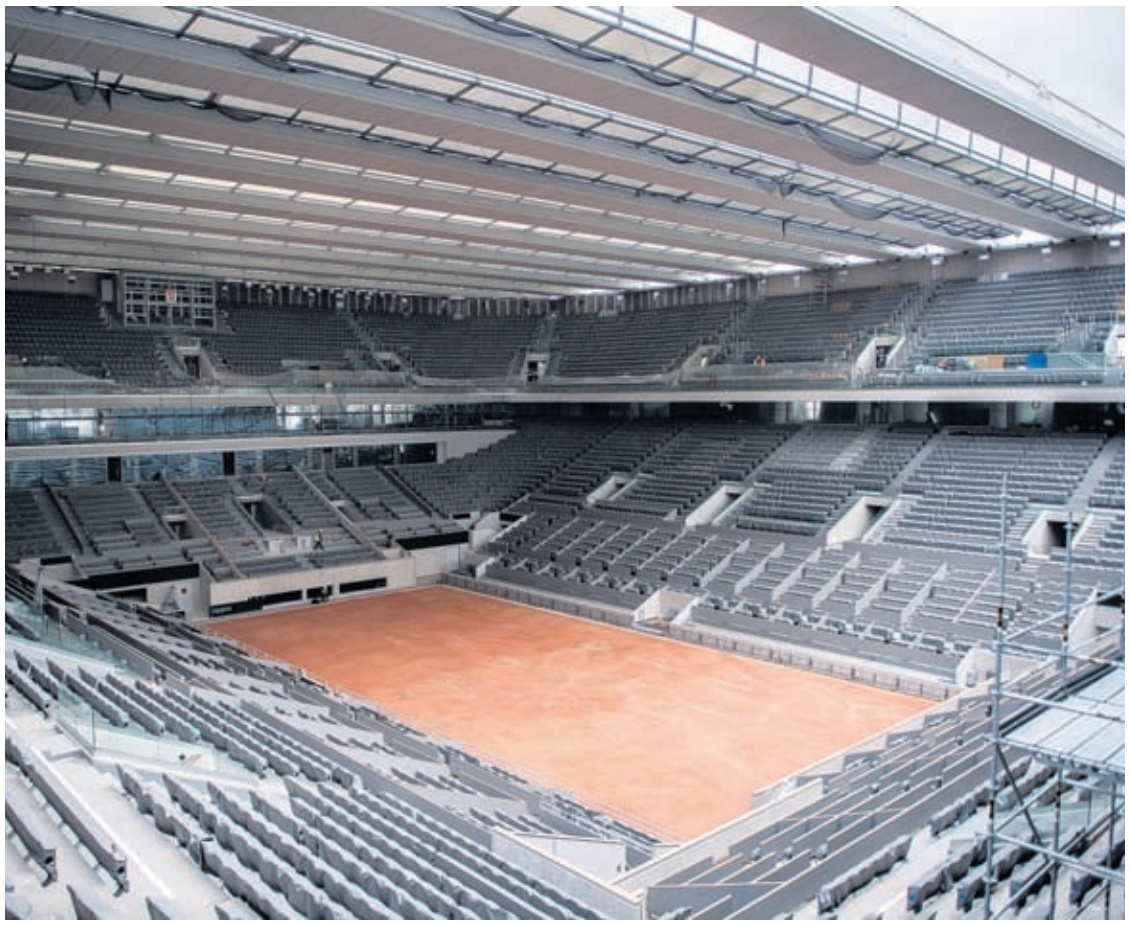
NASCAR and iRacing announced the formation of the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series on Tuesday night, trying to give fans alternative viewing with the NASCAR season on hold until at least May 3. The multi-week series will start Sunday with a virtual competition at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Remaining races and broadcast details are expected to be announced at a later date.

Denny Hamlin, Clint Bowyer, Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell will also be among those competing. A one-off simulation event was held last weekend after a race at Atlanta Motor Speedway was postponed. Josh Williams, spotter for Ryan Blaney, won that race, which also featured Earnhardt and Hamlin.

"Until we have cars back on track, the entire NASCAR community has aligned to provide our passionate fans with a unique, fun and competitive experience on race day," said Ben Kennedy, NASCAR'S vice president of racing development. "Our longtime partners at iRacing offer an incredible product and we are excited to see how many of our best drivers will stack up in the virtual domain of competitive racing."❑

Dale Earnhardt Jr., team owner and TV analyst answers questions during a news conference before the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Sunday, Feb. 16, 2020, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Associated Press



In this Feb. 5, 2020, file photo, construction work of the newly built roof of the Philippe Chatrier center court is pictured at Roland Garros stadium in Paris.

Associated Press

Tennis tours stop until June for COVID-19; rankings frozen

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP Tennis Writer

The ATP and WTA professional tennis tours suspended all competition through at least June 7 because of the new coronavirus pandemic and froze their rankings Wednesday "until further notice."

In a rare joint statement by the men's and women's tours, they announced that the entire clay-court circuit "will not be held as scheduled" — a day after the start of the French Open, also played on that surface, was postponed from May to September.

The French tennis federation's go-it-alone decision to pick new dates and reschedule the beginning of its clay-court Grand Slam tournament for one week after the end of the hard-court U.S. Open in New York prompted some shade from the fractured sport's other governing bodies.

"Now is not a time to act unilaterally, but in unison," the ATP-WTA statement said. "All decisions related to the impact of the coronavirus require appropriate consultation and review with the stakeholders in the game." It went on to say that is "a view that is shared by" the ATP, WTA, International Tennis Federation and the groups that run the U.S. Open, Wimbledon and Australian Open — the three non-French Grand Slam tournaments.

For most people, COVID-19 causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

As of now, the next major championship on the tennis calendar is Wimbledon, which is scheduled to start in England on June 29.

Its organizers and those in charge of the U.S. Open, which is slated to begin on Aug. 31, have said they are not yet ready to make any changes to their tournaments but are studying the matter.

Shortly after the ATP-WTA announcement, the the ITF put a halt to its lower-tier events until June 7.

The tours said last week they would suspend play until late April or early May.

The tournaments affected by Wednesday's moves include combined men's and women's events in Madrid and Rome.

Also being scrapped are upcoming WTA tournaments in Strasbourg, France, and Rabat, Morocco, along with ATP events in Munich; Estoril, Portugal; Geneva; and Lyon, France.

With players unable to add points by winning matches, they won't lose them now, either, so will hold their current spots in the ATP and WTA rankings until June — and possibly beyond.

The rankings of June 8, which was supposed to be the day after the French Open concluded, were going to be the cutoff to help determine qualification for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. It is not known whether that will change.❑

Team Groupama FDJ's Thibault Pinot, of France, thrashes his bicycle towards the line to finish the seventh and final stage of the Paris Nice cycling race over 166 kilometers starting in Nice and finishing in Valdeblore La Colmiane, France, Saturday, March 14, 2020.

Associated Press

UCI president hopes Giro, other races can go ahead in autumn

PARIS (AP) — The president of the International Cycling Union hopes the Giro d'Italia and other races postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak can go ahead later this year.

Four one-day classic races to be held next month were canceled this week. The Paris-Roubaix cobblestone race, the Fleche Wallonne, Liege-Bastogne-Liege and the Amstel Gold race have all been called off.

The Strade Bianche and Milan-San Remo were already postponed along with the Giro, which was to start on May 9.

UCI president David Lappartient told French television on Wednesday that he has "good hope" several races can still go ahead.

"In the coming days and weeks we will work on remodelling the calendar, depending on the evolution of the epidemic," Lappartient told France TV. "The first possibility is to reprogram the monuments of cycling (the classics) for the autumn. For that we have the possibility of pushing back the end of the season by two weeks to Oct. 31."

Most people quickly recover from the virus after experiencing only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks.

Lappartient said he is consulting with Italian race organizer RCS about holding the Giro "probably in autumn."

The Giro would not start as scheduled from Hungary, he added, and the route may be redesigned and shorter. It was set to be the first time a Grand Tour visited Hungary, with the capital city of Budapest holding a stage starting from Heroes' Square."The Giro is obviously part of our priorities and we have good hope to see it taking place," Lappartient said. "With regards to the Tour (de France), for now nothing changes."

ASO has yet to announce a decision on the three-week Tour, which is set to start in Nice on June 27.❑

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Norwegian musher achieves boyhood dream, wins Iditarod race

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — As a young boy growing up in Norway, Thomas Waerner spent idle hours thinking long and hard about two different kinds of iconic American modes of transportation: muscle cars and the sled dogs in the Iditarod.

Waerner, 47, made one of those dreams reality on Wednesday, winning the nearly 1,000-mile (1,609-kilometer) Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race across Alaska. He took a commanding lead in the late stages of the race and held a five-hour advantage over the next closest musher, three-time champion Mitch Seavey.

"This is awesome," Waerner said after winning the race. "This is something special."

Waerner took his dog team over mountain ranges, on the frozen Yukon River and across treacherous Bering Sea ice to the finish line on Nome's main street in 9 days, 10 hours, 37 minutes and 47 seconds.

The race started March 8 north of Anchorage and was one of the few sporting events in the U.S. that wasn't canceled because of the new coronavirus.

The Iditarod encouraged fans not to travel to Nome for the finish as the city closed public buildings to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Events like the musher's banquet were postponed.

Thomas Waerner, of Norway, arrives in Nome, Alaska, Wednesday, March 18, 2020, to win the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Associated Press

But fans didn't employ social distancing as they poured out of bars and hotels to cheer Waerner as he drove the team off the Bering Sea ice and down Nome's Front Street to the finish line just after 12:30 a.m.

He will earn a minimum of $50,000 and a new pickup truck for winning the race. The actual cash amount will depend on how many mushers finish the race, a factor in how the prize money is divvied out.

Waerner immediately thanked the 10 dogs in harness, petting and rubbing each dog, ending his with lead dogs K2 and Bark before handing out treats.

He called K2 "an amazing dog."

"He has this inside engine that never stops," Waerner said.

Bark is the tough one, the winning musher said.

"He's the one just charging through everything. It doesn't matter what comes, he will just go through it, storms or whatever," Waerner said. So they two together are an amazing team."

Waerner, who began mushing in 1984, won the Iditarod in only his second attempt.

He finished 17th in 2015, when he earned Rookie of the Year honors. Wearner last year won the 745-mile (1,200-kilometer) Finnmarkslopet, the longest sled dog race in Europe.

As an 11-year-old boy in Norway, he read mushing magazines touting the achievements of some of the Iditarod's most famous mushers of that era. Their ranks included the race's only five-time winner, Rick Swenson, and a four-time winner, the late Susan Butcher, who in the 1985 race had to fight off an angry moose with an axe after it killed two of her dogs.

Waerner told reporters at the finish line that it was always his "dream to come here and do the race."

Waerner became the second Norwegian musher in the last three years and third this century to win the race. Joar Leifseth Ulsom won in 2018 and Robert Sorlie took titles 2003 and 2005.

All three Norwegians earned Rookie of the Year honors before winning.

Waerner encouraged other Norwegian mushers to follow in their footsteps.

"This is a great race you can do," he said. "Just start training."

Warner's victory was also a moment of pride for the Anchorage Sons of Norway chapter. Members considered throwing a banquet in his honor at a lodge, but restrictions put into place by the city over fears of the coronavirus derailed those plans.

"We are super excited," said Lise Falskow, the Norwegian honorary consul in Alaska

"Whenever a Norwegian is involved in the Iditarod, it's something that we all rally behind and get very excited because the Norwegians, they're tough and they're determined and like Alaskans, they don't shy away from the Iditarod," she said.

Waerner lives in Torpa, Norway, with his wife, Guro. She is a veterinarian who helps out with their kennel. He also owns an electrical business.❑

Roger Mayweather, boxer and trainer, dies at 58

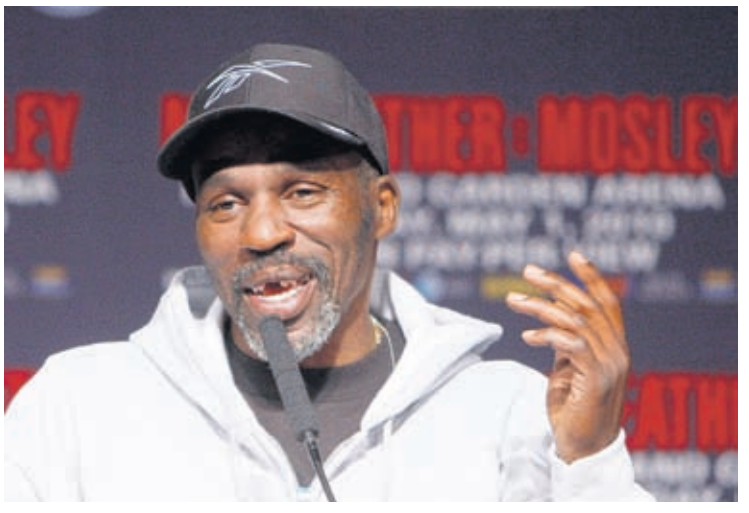
LAS VEGAS (AP) — Roger Mayweather, a former world champion who also trained his nephew Floyd Mayweather Jr., has died at the age of 58.

Floyd Mayweather announced the death in a statement on Tuesday. Roger Mayweather had been ill with diabetes and other long-term health issues.

"My uncle was one of the most important people in my life inside and outside of the ring," Mayweather said. "Roger was a great champion and one of the best trainers in boxing. Unfortunately, his health was failing him for several years and now he can finally rest in peace. Roger meant the world to me, my father Floyd Sr., my uncle Jeff, our whole family, everyone in and around the Mayweather Boxing Gym and the entire boxing world."

Mayweather, whose nickname was the "Black Mamba," held titles at 130 and 140 pounds in a pro career that spanned 72 fights. A native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, he fought such names as Julio Cesar Chavez and Pernell Whitaker and was 59-13 with 35 knockouts in an 18-year career that began in 1981.

Mayweather was a colorful figure in the boxing world, winning titles but gaining more notoriety later as a trainer for his nephew. He was in the corner for some of Floyd Mayweather's biggest fights.



In this April 28, 2010, file photo, Roger Mayweather, speaks during a news conference in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

Last week, Josie Harris, the mother of three of Mayweather's children, was found dead in her car in front of her house in Valencia, California.❑

Retreat and Advance

By Carlos M Viana
Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN)
SANTA CRUZ - For many it felt like the end of the world. The Great Depression began in 1929 and quickly spread worldwide. By 1932, one of every four workers were unemployed. Banks failed and life savings were lost, leaving many people destitute. With no job and no savings, thousands of Americans lost their homes. Republican U.S. President Hoover decided the government could do nothing to help. The poor lived in cardboard shacks in so-called Hoovervilles on the edges of cities across the nation; hundreds of thousands roamed the country on foot and in railroad boxcars in futile search of jobs. Although few starved, hunger and malnutrition affected many.

With the nation at its peak of the Great Depression, fed up with their uncaring president, the United States elected Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 4, 1933. He started his inauguration speech by saying "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance".

We are entering a global stress that is, in many, producing fears. The world has been in this situation many times already and we survived. Another global pandemic, the 1918 influenza lasted from January 1918 until December 1920; was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic. It was the first of the two pandemics involving the H1N1 influenza virus, with the second being the swine flu in 2009. People died during these pandemics from pneumonia and heart failure. Pneumonia is an infection in one or both lungs caused by bacteria, viruses, and fungi. The infection causes inflammation in the air sacs in your lungs, which are called alveoli. The alveoli fill with fluid or pus, making it difficult to breathe.

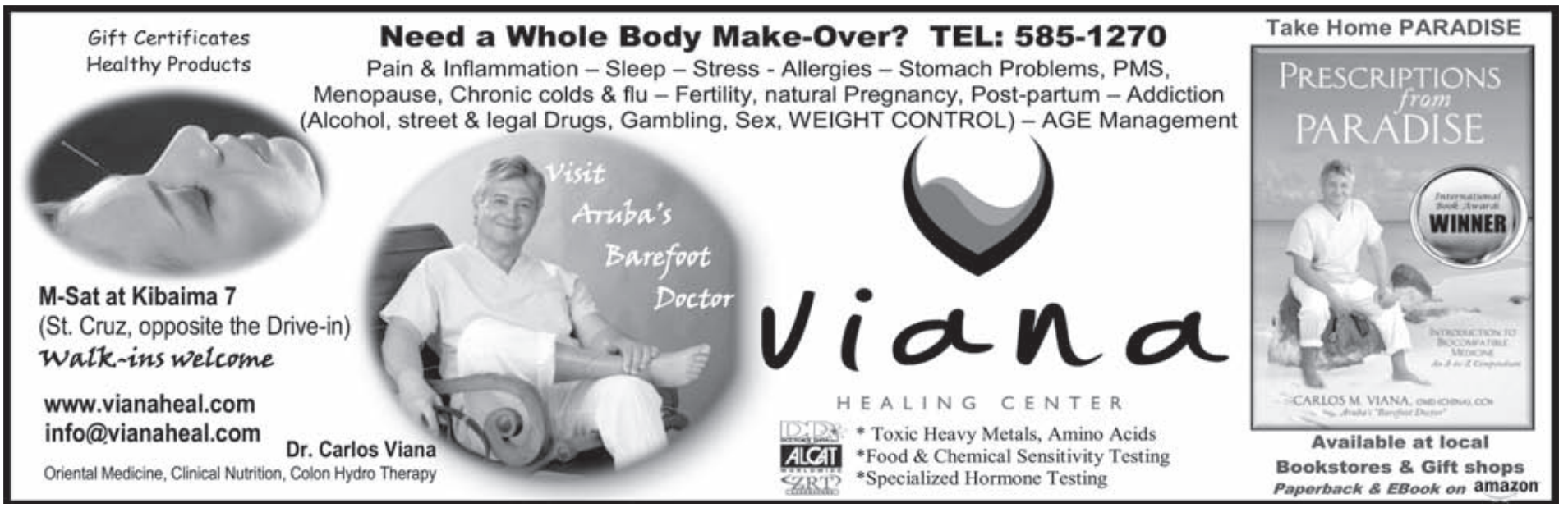
Today, we know that with the 1918 pandemic, many died because of aspirin. In a 2009 paper published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases, Karen Starko concluded that aspirin poisoning contributed substantially to the fatalities. She based this on the symptoms in those dying from the flu, as reported in the postmortem reports still available. The timing of the big "death spike" in October 1918occurred shortly after the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army and the Journal of the American Medical Association both recommended large doses of 8 to 31 grams of aspirin per day as part of treatment. Complications of taking aspirin include low blood sugar, seizures, swelling of the brain or lungs and heart failure.

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and heart failure is also why people die from COVID 19. The initial symptoms of COVID 19 are flu-like and may include fever, headache, muscle pain, tiredness, cough, sore throat, and other nonspecific symptoms. The only symptom common to all patients appears to be a fever above 38 °C (100 °F). SARS may eventually lead to shortness of breath and pneumonia, either direct viral pneumonia or secondary bacterial pneumonia

At home, we are planning not to use any aspirin, paracetamol, ibuprofen, or other medication for fever or pain. Thankfully acupuncture works wonders on headaches. The natural medicine reduction of fever has for centuries been an enema. Our choice is the old-fashioned red bag and white tube. Warm, clean water slowly flowing into the anus provides rehydrating water and will help reduce fevers.

We also learn from the 1918 pandemic about what doctors called, the 'open-Air' treatment. Medics found that severely ill flu patients nursed outdoors recovered better than those treated in an indoor, closed environment. A combination of fresh air and sunlight seems to have prevented deaths among patients, and infections among medical staff. There is scientific support for this. Research shows that outdoor air is a natural disinfectant. Fresh air can kill the flu virus and other harmful germs. Equally, sunlight is germicidal and there is now evidence it can kill the flu virus. Sunlight increases Vitamin D levels and there are many medical journal articles reporting the antiviral effect of vitamin D. Unfortunately, many people today have low levels of vitamin D3, which not only strengthens bone health, but is showing immune system support.

Get the Point! American author, Andrew Smith wrote - "People fear what they cannot understand and what they cannot control." We can control how we are facing the COVID 19 pandemic! With good hygiene, public distancing, minimizing time spent in tightly closed (air-conditioned or heated buildings), take this time home to prepare healthier meals and add immune support vitamins like C, D3and zinc. For headache resist, aspirin and try an enema for fever, get outside for a walk, open a window, enjoy your garden, a park or the sea while the crowds are low. Remember to check on those in need. Focusing on safely helping others, keeps us from focusing on fear. Time to Advance. We will get through this too.❑



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FDIC warns of scams saying banks in trouble from outbreak

NEW YORK (AP) — One of the nation's bank regulators is urging Americans not to withdraw large sums of cash and to beware of fraudsters claiming that banks are limiting customers' access to their money.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation issued a statement Wednesday warning about an increase in scams trying to sow distrust in the U.S. financial system while the nation is dealing with the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

Many banks have shortened branch hours or are pushing customers to use online banking exclusively to avoid transmission of the virus. This has led more Americans to pull cash out of ATMs in some communities. Darrin Williams, CEO of Southern Bancorp, said the bank had ordered 30% more cash to keep up with withdrawals.

The FDIC says it has seen an uptick in calls, text messages, letters and emails from scammers pretending to be FDIC employees, using names of people who actually work at the FDIC. The scammers falsely claim that banks are limiting access to deposits or that there are security issues with bank deposits. The scammers, along with trying to sow distrust, are also after bank account and other personal information.

The FDIC insures every depositor up to $250,000 in each bank where they hold deposits. No depositor has lost money since the FDIC was created in 1933, in response to the large number of bank failures and bank runs in the early years of the Great Depression.

"Customers' deposits remain safe in these banks, as does customer access to their funds. Banks continue to offer ATM, mobile, or online banking services, and many continue to provide services via drive-through window," the FDIC said in a statement.

While the stock market has fallen sharply and the U.S. economy could potentially fall into a recession, banks are not at risk of failure. The FDIC's "troubled bank" list is at an all-time low, and bank capital at every bank is higher than it was prior to the Great Recession.❑

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Q&A: What does 90-day tax payment delay mean for filers?

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL and MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Business Writers

The Trump administration has announced that most individuals and businesses will be allowed to delay paying their federal tax bills for 90 days as part of an emergency relief plan amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Some questions and answers about the delay and its potential impact on the U.S. economy.

This July 24, 2018, file photo shows a portion of the 1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return form.

Associated Press

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DO I STILL NEED TO FILE?

Yes.

The details on the program are still scant. But as of now, taxpayers need to file their federal tax returns by the traditional April 15 deadline. The 90-day extension is solely for the money that is due. Those delayed payments are now due July 15. However, taxpayers who are facing difficulty filing on time always still have the option to request a six-month extension. Visit the IRS website for more details.

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WHO GETS TO WAIT TO PAY?

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said individuals who owe less than $1 million will be able to delay paying. Corporations will be able to defer payment on taxes due up to $10 million. Mnuchin said only the "super rich" would be excluded.

However, because details are still pending, it's unclear if the delay applies to trusts or whether people who make quarterly payments on their taxes will still need to make that first payment by April 15, said Lance Christensen, a partner at the accounting firm of Margolin Winer & Evens.

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WILL I BE PENALIZED FOR WAITING TO MAKE PAYMENTS?

No. During this unprecedented delay, individuals and corporations will not be subject to interest or penalty payments.

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WHAT IF I AM EXPECTING A REFUND?

If you are expecting a refund, continue to file as usual. As of now, the IRS is still processing returns and sending out refunds.

___

DOES THIS APPLY TO MY STATE TAXES TOO?

No. Check with your state tax authority to see about any changes to due dates. Some are not extending their deadline, others are following the federal model and others still are setting their own deadlines. California, for example, has bumped its date for filing and payment of state taxes to June 15.

___

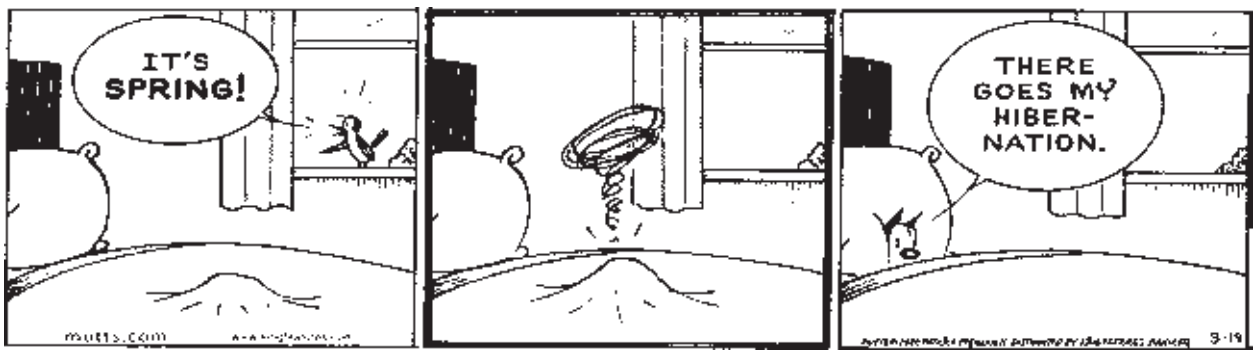
HOW WILL THIS HELP THE ECONOMY?

It's unclear.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin estimates that taxpayers will be able to keep $300 billion in the economy for now. And some tax and economic experts say any extra cash in the hands of Americans is helpful because many will be struggling to get by. ❑

ARUBA TODAY

Mutts

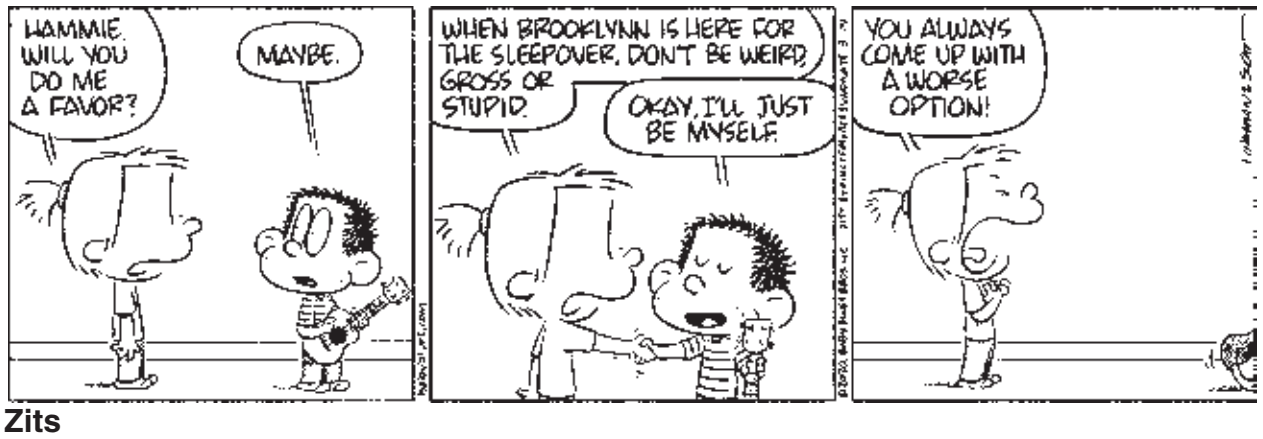


6 Chix

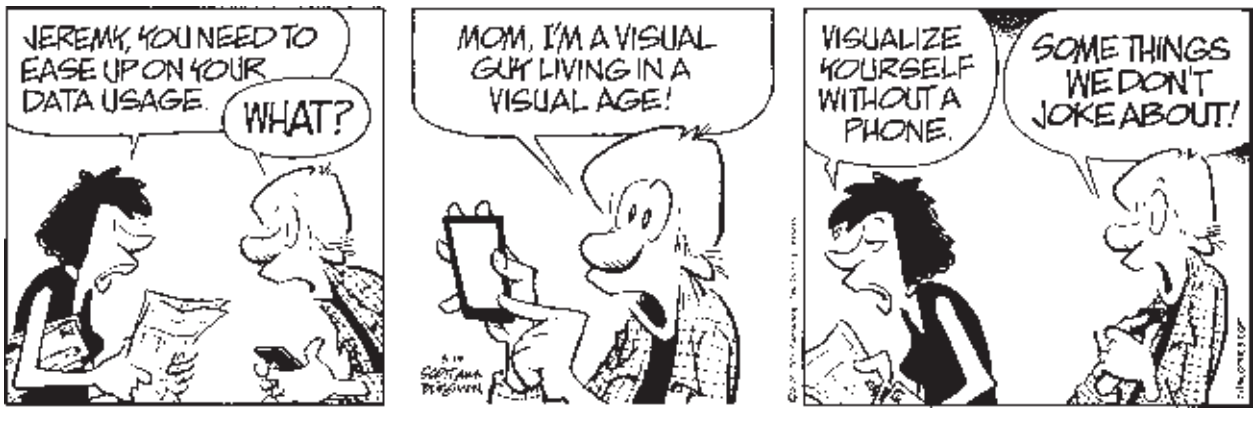
Blondie

Mother Goose & Grimm

Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

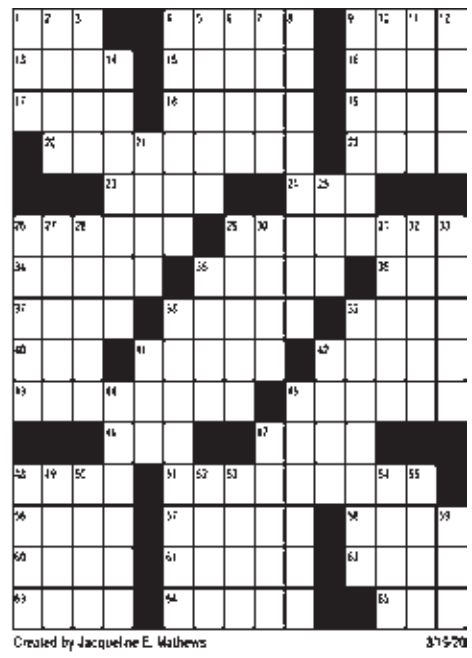
			4		9			
3		5						7
4	6		3			9		
					4		9	5
	8						2	
5	7		8					
		3			7		5	1
8						2		6
			6		2			

Difficulty Level ★★★

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

6	9	7	1	3	8	5	4	2
3	1	5	2	7	4	9	6	8
2	4	8	9	6	5	1	3	7
8	2	6	3	5	1	4	7	9
7	5	9	4	2	6	3	8	1
4	3	1	8	9	7	6	2	5
9	6	3	7	1	2	8	5	4
5	8	2	6	4	9	7	1	3
1	7	4	5	8	3	2	9	6



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 3-19-20

ACROSS
1 Break into tears
4 Yale animals
9 Flows back
13 Betty ___ of old cartoons
15 Courtroom procedure
16 Feast with a roast pig
17 Wise man
18 Cuban dance
19 1996 GOP candidate
20 Sends away
22 Teary-___: emotional
23 Hed on to
24 "Elvis ___ left the building"
26 Speak highly of
29 Hewlett-Packard machines
34 Hits the ceiling
35 $1,000
36 Almost ready for a refill
37 ___-the-top outrageous
38 Vistaken
39 Angelica or Rudolph
40 Franklin or Savage
41 Pass out
42 He's ruler
43 Coming into
45 Fights off
46 Take a toast off
47 Pence, for short
48 Tourette's symptoms
51 Backstring
56 Circle dance
57 Banishment
58 Time when both hands are straight up
60 "___ in a Manger"
61 Pago Pago's land
62 Actress Lollobrigida
63 Captures
64 At the head of the class
65 Cartoon dog

DOWN
1 ABC competitor
2 Beatles' "The Long and Winding ___"
3 Yellowstone Park bear
4 Barber pole feature
5 Have confidence in
6 Prepares to shoot
7 Actor Kaplan
8 Cutting prices drastically
9 First among siblings
10 Life ___: circular floating device
11 Actor Christian
12 Sought legal action against
14 More annoying
21 Military meal
25 "... O'er the land of the free ___ the home..."
26 Thorough investigation
27 Bird in a Poe poem
28 Athlete's negotiator
29 Fork part
30 Angry grade
31 Make joyous
32 Regal
33 Graceful swimmers
36 Smile
38 One who takes orders
39 ___ out: planning a route
41 Thanksgiving's "follower" labor
42 Notices
44 Prose writings
45 Say again
47 Bravery
48 Easier said ___ done
49 Okinawa's state
50 ___ Louie, King of Salads
52 School test
53 ___ bears
54 Pinch ___ red wire
55 "___, but not forgotten"
59 Girl's nickname

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

■	C	A	N	■	T	O	S	C	A	■	A	B	L	E
M	O	P	E	■	A	L	I	E	N	■	P	A	I	D
G	L	O	W	■	K	I	D	N	A	P	P	I	N	G
M	E	L	■	R	I	V	E	T	■	A	L	L	E	Y
■	■	O	P	I	N	E	■	A	C	E	■	■	■	■
R	A	G	I	N	G	■	■	F	I	E	S	T	A	■
A	M	E	N	D	■	S	W	O	R	D	■	H	O	P
M	A	Y	E	■	S	H	O	E	S	■	H	E	R	R
P	S	I	■	S	P	E	W	S	■	F	O	R	T	E
■	S	C	A	L	E	D	■	■	D	I	S	M	A	Y
■	■	■	S	I	D	■	■	M	O	T	T	O	■	■
O	F	T	E	N	■	S	K	I	D	S	■	S	A	P
W	R	O	N	G	D	O	I	N	G	■	S	T	I	R
E	A	R	S	■	O	U	N	C	E	■	K	A	L	E
S	Y	N	E	■	O	L	D	E	R	■	I	T	S	■

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Public debut without public for polar bear cubs at Dutch zoo

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A pair of twin polar bear cubs have made their public debut at a Dutch zoo -- but without the public because of coronavirus restrictions.

There was no sign of social distancing between the three-and-a-half-month-old cubs and their mother as they cautiously ventured out of the maternity den at the Ouwehands Zoo on Wednesday morning.

The twins stuck close to their mother, called Freedom, as they explored their outdoor enclosure for the first time since they were born on Nov. 27.

In video released by the zoo, Freedom kept a close eye on her cubs and gently licked the head of one as it suckled.

The cubs are the product of a European breeding program intended to help preserve the endangered species.

The gender of the cubs is not yet known. Once that is established, likely after they take their first swim, the zoo has two male names -- Yuku and Atlas -- and two female names -- Yura and Nova -- ready.

The Ouwehands Zoo in the central town of Rhenen has been forced to close its doors by a government ban, in force until at least April 6, on gatherings of more than 100 people.❑

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3 BR Ocean view $28K

Aruba Divi Phoenix
2 BR PH wk 11/12
Building 9 on the 7th floor
30 weeks remain $35 K each
1 BR wk 11
Building 7 on the 3rd floor
33 weeks remain $14 K

Divi Village
2 BR wk 13 $13 K
Building C 28weeks remain
Casa del Mar
1 BR wk 12 $7500

Divi Links Golf
1 BR wk 11 $9 K
Birdie 3 with 26 weeks remain
1 BR wk 12/13 $9,5 K each
Birdie 10 ground floor
33/34 weeks remain

La cabana beach and casino
1 BR wk 11/12 $8 5 K each
4 th floor pool /Ocean
Sunday check in
212598

Dutch Village
1 BR wk 9 old contract
16 weeks remain $7,5 K

Caribbean palm village
1 BR wk 13 $6K
Second floor
1 BR wk 14 $6 K
Ground floor

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Sobre Sta, Cruz
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Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
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CRUISES

March 19
- PENDING -

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'Wonderchicken' fossil reveals ancestor of today's birds

By MALCOLM RITTER AP Science Writer

New York (AP) — A tiny fossil skull nicknamed "Wonderchicken" is giving scientists a rare glimpse at early ancestors of today's birds. It may be the oldest known fossil from this group.

With a face like those of today's chicken-like birds and a back portion like that of living duck-like birds, Wonderchicken is " down near the bottom of the modern-bird family tree," said Daniel Field of Cambridge University.

He and others announced the find in a report released Wednesday by the journal Nature. They named the creature Asteriornis maastrichtensis, but let's stick with Wonderchicken.

Found in Belgium, it is some 66.7 to 66.8 million years old. A previously reported Antarctic fossil find is about as old, but its precise age and place on the evolutionary tree are not clear. Field said the Belgian skull is slightly older.

This March 2020 photo provided by researcher Daniel J. Field shows him holding a life-size 3D print of the Asteriornis maastrichtensis "Wonderchicken" skull in Cambridge, England.

Associated Press

It appeared as a block of broken rocks with some broken leg bones sticking out. After it was donated to a museum, Field tried CT scanning to get a better look at those bones. To his astonishment, the scanning revealed a well preserved skull inside the rock "staring out of the computer screen right at us."

The leg bones let researchers estimate the creature was the size of a very small duck, weighing only about 14 ounces (395 grams). Its legs were long and slender, and it was evidently a shore bird and it could probably fly, Field said.

Wonderchicken lived just before the asteroid impact that's blamed for killing off many species, most notably the giant dinosaurs. That suggests the evolution of the family tree for modern-day-birds was in a very early stage when the asteroid struck, Field said.

Close relatives of Wonderchicken survived the cataclysm, and the fossil itself shows some traits that have been proposed as beneficial for making it through, Field said. It was small, and its legs suggest it did not live in trees, an important factor since forests were thought to have been devastated by wildfires.

"It also probably paid to not be picky about what you are eating," since there wasn't much on the menu in the aftermath of the asteroid strike, Field said. Wonderchicken's beak shows no signs of a specialized diet, he said.

Scientists unconnected to the research were enthusiastic.

Kevin Padian, a paleontologist at the University of California, Berkeley, said the fossil provides the best evidence yet of when and how the earliest ancestors of today's birds evolved.

Genetic studies have suggested that those ancestors appeared tens of millions of years earlier than Wonderchicken, he said. But at this point the fossil record shows no support for that, and there's no known fossil that is clearly from this lineage that predates Wonderchicken, he said.

Julia Clarke, a fossil-bird expert at the University of Texas at Austin, said the fossil "has a lot of information that can start to add to our picture of the earliest steps" in the proliferation of living birds species.

Fossils are snapshots, she said, and "right now our photo album has almost nothing in it" from this time period that relates to modern-day birds. "Any new picture is of key importance."❑

Stuck home? Planets, moon providing predawn entertainment

By MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Stuck at home this week? The planets and our moon are providing some early morning entertainment.

In this March 10, 2020, file photo, vehicles are dwarfed as the nearly full moon rises in the distance in Shawnee, Kan.

Associated Press

Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and a crescent moon will be clustered together in the southeastern sky just before daybreak. Mercury will peek above the horizon.

All this is happening amid the earliest March equinox in 124 years.

The vernal equinox, which marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere — and autumn in the Southern Hemisphere — will occur late Thursday night in the U.S. That's the earliest since 1896.

This is also a good time to spot Sirius, the brightest star in our night sky.

Barely 8.6 light-years away, Sirius is especially brilliant this time of year. It's also known as the Dog Star because it's in the Canis Major constellation.

To spot Sirius, find Orion in the southern sky and follow Orion's belt. The three stars making up the belt point toward Sirius, downward in the Northern Hemisphere and upward in the Southern Hemisphere.❑

Broadway stars stream, rock stars stay off road amid virus

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — From helping others cope to sheltering in place to canceling events, here's a look at some of the ways the entertainment industry is reacting to the spread of the coronavirus, which most people recover from but can cause severe illness in the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions.

In this combination photo, Audra McDonald attends the 42nd Annual Kennedy Center Honors at The Kennedy Center in Washington on Dec. 8, 2019, left, and Idina Menzel arrives at the Oscars in Los Angeles on Feb. 9, 2020.

Associated Press

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SINGING AT HOME

Broadway shows may be shuttered, but that's not stopping some Broadway voices.

Stage stars like Audra McDonald, Idina Menzel, Kristin Chenoweth, Norbert Leo Butz, Kelli O'Hara, Wayne Brady, Betty Buckley and Laura Benanti will appear singing and performing live from their homes in two daily mini-online charity shows starting Monday night.

The shows are the brainchild of Seth Rudetsky and James Wesley, the host and producer of Sirius XM's "On Broadway," and will follow the traditional theater times of 2 p.m. Eastern and 8 p.m. Eastern.

The shows will encourage viewers to donate to The Actors Fund's services for those dealing with the coronavirus outbreak and its financial costs.

"Broadway at Home" will kick off Monday with Kelli O'Hara. The shows can be seen at The Actors Fund YouTube channel, as well as Playbill.com and BroadwayWorld.com.

Some other stars who have signed up include Shoshana Bean, Sierra Boggess, Laura Bell Bundy, Kerry Butler, Carolee Carmello, Gavin Creel, Melissa Errico, Raúl Esparza, Christopher Fitzgerald, Ana Gasteyer, Mandy Gonzalez, Justin Guarini, James Monroe Iglehart, Jeremy Jordan, Marc Kudish, Judy Kuhn, Linda Lavin, Beth Leavel, Telly Leung, Beth Malone, Lindsay Mendez, Kate Shindle, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Jessie Mueller, Rosie O'Donnell, Alice Ripley, Adam Pascal, Faith Prince, Keala Settle, Marc Shaiman, Jennifer Simard, Elizabeth Stanley, Patrick Wilson and Marissa Jaret Winokur.

Couples who also plan to appear are: Sebastian Arcelus and Stephanie J. Block, Will Chase and Ingrid Michaelson, Jen Cody and Hunter Foster, Jenn Colella and Chilina Kennedy, Colin Donnell and Patti Murrin, Santino and Jessica Fontana, Andy Karl and Orfeh, Liz Larsen and Sal Viviano, Steven Pasquale and Phillipa Soo, plus McDonald and Will Swenson.

Online concerts have taken on a new appeal as the virus keeps people inside. Latin singers Juanes and Alejandro Sanz recently performed on YouTube Live, a pair of Metropolitan Opera stars have belted out tunes on Facebook and Instagram, the Russian-German pianist Igor Levit took to Twitter on Thursday to stream his music and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra live streamed a Beethoven symphony.

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MET GALA MUST WAIT

The Met Gala, annually one of the biggest nights in fashion, has been postponed due to the coronavirus.

Host Anna Wintour announced Monday on Vogue.com that the gala will not be held on its usual first Monday in May, due to the "unavoidable and responsible decision by the Metropolitan Museum to close its doors."

This year's previously announced celebrity hosts include Lin Manuel-Miranda, Meryl Streep and Emma Stone.

The Met Gala was one of the last remaining major cultural events in the coming weeks that had yet to be postponed or canceled.

Other delayed events announced Monday include the GLAAD Media Awards, which had been set to honor Taylor Swift and Janet Mock for their advocacy for LGBTQ issues in Los Angeles on April 16, and the iHeartMusic Awards, which were scheduled for Los Angeles with host Usher and performers including Lizzo on March 29.

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OFF THE ROAD

Elton John is postponing part of his North American tour due to the coronavirus pandemic. The superstar said Monday that the March 26 through May 2 shows of his Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour will be rescheduled. Tour performances for May 22 through July 8 remain as scheduled.

Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl says he didn't cancel shows when he broke his leg —and performed from a wheel chair onstage — but he must postpone his band's tour because of the coronavirus. The rocker wrote Monday on Twitter that "playing a gig with a sock full of broken bones is one thing, but playing a show when YOUR health and safety is in jeopardy is another." The band has postponed April dates of its Van Tour 2020, and says "information on the May dates will be forthcoming."

It's not just musicians.

"Diary of a Wimpy Kid" author Jeff Kinney on Monday postponed his new book and his spring tour. Kinney had planned an unusual promotion for the spinoff book "Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Adventure," which now is planned for August.

He would have no set itinerary and would only learn from his publisher after each stop about where he was going next. In a statement Monday, Kennedy cited concerns about the coronavirus and said that a postponement would "better serve the bookselling community."

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CELEBS SAY THIS IS SERIOUS

Idris Elba tweeted that he has tested positive for coronavirus but has shown no symptoms so far.

Elba said Monday that he has been isolated since Friday, when he found out he might have been exposed. Elba in a video message said that his wife has not been tested yet but is feeling OK.

"This is serious. Now's really the time to think about social distancing, washing your hands," Elba said.

Olga Kurylenko, the Ukrainian actress who starred in the 2008 James Bond film "Quantum of Solace," also says she has tested positive. "Take care of yourself and take this seriously!" Kurylenko said in an Instagram post Monday. And "Game of Thrones" actor Kristofer Hivju, who played the beloved character Tormund Giantsbane on the HBO series, announced on his Instagram page that he has tested positive and will be isolating himself at his home in his native Norway.

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'THE CROWN' CARRIES ON

With everything else in sight shutting down, "The Crown" is forging ahead, for now.

The Netflix show is set to wrap principal photography for its forthcoming fourth season at Elstree Studios London on Wednesday, and has stayed in production in the scramble to finish. This cycle of the show about Queen Elizabeth II and her family stars Olivia Colman as the monarch, Tobias Menzies as her husband and Helena Bonham Carter has her sister, Margaret.

"In the final days we will be keeping a close eye on the situation as it develops with health and safety the top priority for all cast and crew," the show's production company Left Bank Pictures said in a statement.

It has one remaining day on the soundstage at Elstree studios. Elsewhere in television, "Saturday Night Live" won't be back as planned this month. The sketch show, which has feasted on the presidential campaign season, is suspending production until further notice. It was to return from hiatus on March 28 with host John Krasinski and musical guest Dua Lipa.❑

At Sing Sing, a museum going in down the hall from inmates

By MICHAEL HILL

OSSINING, N.Y. (AP) — Busting out of Sing Sing has been a dream of inmates since cell doors started clanging shut along the Hudson River in the 1820s. Now there's a plan to usher visitors inside the high walls well known in the past to gangsters, Hollywood stars and prisoners condemned to the electric chair.

A museum just beyond the maximum-security prison's watch towers is being planned with a unique feature: a 300-foot-long (91 meters) corridor connecting to the roofless ruins of the original 19th century cell block inside the walls. Museum-goers would stand at the site of the first cramped cells at this prison "up the river" from New York City and learn about life in the Big House.

In this Feb. 13, 2020 photo, concertina wire and vines line the stone walls of a former cell block at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, N.Y.

Associated Press

"It's so much more than just barbed wire and stone walls," said Sean Pica, who was released from the Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 2002. "For those of us that lived in these prisons to know that time will be captured, the history will be told, is exciting — for the good and for the bad."

Pica is a board member of the not-for-profit group planning to open the Sing Sing Prison Museum in 2025. Visitors will learn about incarceration in America and about a lockup that looms large culturally.

Infamous inmates who have passed through the gates 30 miles north of New York City include Charles "Lucky" Luciano and "Son of Sam" killer David Berkowitz. There were 614 people who walked the last mile — 45 feet, actually — to the electric chair here, among them Cold War spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

The prison's forbidding reputation was burnished by Hollywood during its golden age through gangster flicks starring James Cagney and other big stars. This is where Holly Golightly visits Sally Tomato in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and where Robert DeNiro's character was sent to in "Analyze This."

The prison's unusual name is commonly attributed to a Native American phrase for "stone upon stone."

The idea for a museum here has been kicking around for decades — complicated by the fact that Sing Sing is an active maximum-security prison currently housing about 1,300 inmates. Museums at defunct prisons, like Alcatraz, are common. Rarer are those like the Angola Prison Museum, which is outside the front gate of the maximum-security Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Agreements are being finalized that would allow the private group to begin renovations this summer on the former powerhouse that will house the museum. Organizers plan to turn the building's locker room into a preview center by the end of this year.

The $45 million plan is not a state project, though New York has supported it with $3.3 million in grants.

While discussions with the state continue, the plan is to open the museum in 2025 with the secure corridor from the powerhouse to the stone shell of the original cell block, according to interim museum executive director Brent D. Glass.

The hollowed-out building used to house cells for 1,200 men on six tiers and runs well longer than a football field.

It was constructed by inmates who were dropped off at the river landing in 1825 and ordered to mine limestone from the hillside for what would become their prison. ❑

Basement cam connects 'Today' show's Savannah Guthrie

This July 12, 2019 file photo shows co-host Savannah Guthrie on NBC's Today show in New York.

Associated Press

By DAVID BAUDER

AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Working at home on Wednesday was a little more involved than a laptop and cellphone for "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie.

Feeling too sick to come to NBC's Manhattan headquarters yet well enough to work, she had a makeshift studio set up in the basement of her suburban New York home and co-anchored the network morning show remotely with Hoda Kotb.

Al Roker, stuck at home because a "Today" show staffer he works with tested positive for the coronavirus, delivered the weather from his kitchen. Tom Costello reported on the virus' impact from his home office in Maryland, an Emmy Award on the shelf behind him.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the virus.

For media, perhaps most surprising is how quickly the pandemic-induced adjustments stopped seeming unusual.

"I think it's a good message," said Libby Leist, the show's executive producer. "We've been told by the government to stay indoors and I think it's important to abide by that."

Guthrie's makeshift studio had two big lights, a blue background, television monitor and TelePrompter. "Today" show staff members dropped the equipment off and, playing it safe, quickly left, leaving it to Guthrie's husband to run things.

"I wasn't feeling my best," a raspy Guthrie told viewers. "A little sore throat, some sniffles. I wouldn't have thought anything of it, but we are in different times, aren't we?"

From her basement, she conducted remote interviews with Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Back at Rockefeller Center, the typical "Today" staff has been cut in half, and is practicing social distancing in the control room, Leist said. The producer, who generally works out of the control room, has instead been holed up in her office across the street. She runs down the day's show with Guthrie and Kotb via Facetime.

Basement cam will have to work at least one more day with Guthrie.

"It did work pretty well," Leist said. "I think the audio could be fixed a little bit."❑

Cinemas close nationwide, Disney postpones 'Black Widow'

By JAKE COYLE

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. movie theaters have closed nationwide due to the coronavirus pandemic, turning dark nearly all of the country's 40,000-plus screens in an unprecedented shutdown.

With most of Hollywood's March and April releases already postponed, the Walt Disney Co. on Tuesday also cleared out its May releases as well, including Marvel's "Black Widow."

The largest chains had tried to remain open even as Hollywood postponed its upcoming release plans and guidelines for social distancing steadily diminished the recommended size of crowds. But after President Donald Trump on Monday urged against gatherings of more than 10 people, AMC Theaters, the nation's largest chain, said Tuesday its theaters would close altogether.

AMC said the latest guidelines made movie theater operations "essentially impossible." It said it would close all locations in the U.S. for at least six to 12 weeks. Regal, the second largest chain, said Monday that its theaters would close until further notice.

The Walt Disney Co. also indefinitely postponed "Black Widow," which had been set to open May 1. Marvel movies have for years been the regular kickoff to the summer movie going season. The company also put off the releases of "David Copperfield (May 8) and "The Woman in the Window" (May 15).

With movie theaters locked down for the foreseeable future, some studios took the extraordinary step of funneling new or recently released films onto home viewing platforms. Universal Pictures said Monday it will make its current and upcoming films available for on-demand rental, becoming the first major studio to break the traditional theatrical window of 90 days due to the pandemic. The studio said it will put movies currently in theaters — "Invisible Man," "The Hunt," "Emma"— up for rental as early as Friday. It also said that "Trolls World Tour," one of the only major releases left on the April calendar, will debut in theaters and on-demand services simultaneously. A 48-hour rental will cost $19.99.

The Varsity Theater, home to concerts, used the marquee to address the need for washing hands due to the coronavirus, the disease that is caused by the new coronavirus, Monday, March 16, 2020 near the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

Most of Europe's cinemas have already shut down, as have those in China, India and elsewhere. North America's shutdown came gradually. On Sunday, the mayors of New York and Los Angeles ordered their cities' theaters closed. Governments in Massachusetts and Quebec also closed theaters.

Cinemark, the nation's third-largest chain, also announced its theaters would shutter Wednesday. Chains including the Alamo Drafthouse, Landmark Theatres, Showcase Cinemas and Bow Tie Cinemas have closed.

New York's Film Forum marquee, usually adorned with titles, instead bore a paraphrased Franklin Roosevelt quotation: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

The Alamo Drafthouse put an "Intermission" card up on its website.

"This news – this situation – is devastating," the 41-theater circuit based in Austin, Texas, wrote. "When we re-open after this unprecedented and indefinite hiatus, it will be in a dramatically altered world, and in an industry that's been shaken to its core."

Over the weekend, ticket sales plunged to their lowest levels in at least 20 years at U.S. and Canadian theaters. Not since a quiet September weekend in 2000 has weekend box-office revenue been so low, according to data firm Comscore.

Universal's move could be seen as either a watershed moment for Hollywood or an aberration due to extreme circumstances. With few exceptions, the major studios have guarded the 90-day exclusivity window even as digital newcomers like Netflix and Amazon have challenged it. For the studios, box office still is the primary revenue generator. Last week, the Motion Picture Association said worldwide ticket sales reached $42.2 billion last year.❑

Maggie Griffin, impish mother of comedian Kathy, dies at 99

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The mother of comedian Kathy Griffin, who inspired many of the jokes in her famous daughter's standup routines, has died. Maggie Griffin was 99.

"My Mom, the one and only, Maggie Griffin, passed away" Tuesday, Kathy Griffin tweeted. "I am gutted. My best friend. I'm shaking. I won't ever be prepared."

The sweet, impish and quick-tongued Maggie Griffin was a frequent presence in her daughter's reality show, "Kathy Griffin: My Life on the D-List," in the early 2000s. More often than not, she was holding a glass of wine.

Addressing her fans, the comedian said in her tweet: "I'm so grateful you guys got to be part of her life. You knew her. You loved her. She knew it.

"Oh, and OF COURSE she went on St Patrick's Day," Griffin went on, followed by three broken-heart emojis.

Griffin revealed on Twitter in January 2019 that her mother had "rapidly fallen into the throes of dementia."

"This is never easy for any child, I know this is a reality that millions of people deal with every year," the comedian wrote. "But when it comes to my mom this is particularly hard because her sharp mind was everything." Kathy Griffin's father and Maggie's husband, John, died in 2007.❑

In this Aug. 29, 2010 file photo, Kathy Griffin and her mother Maggie Griffin arrive at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

This assortment of foxgloves, pictured growing June 9, 2019, near Langley, Wash., is attractive to a variety of pollinators, especially bumblebees.
Associated Press

`Re-Wilding' your lawn takes work, especially at first

By DEAN FOSDICK
Associated Press

"Re-wilding" is the trend toward diversifying traditional lawns by putting in native plants that flower and fruit, boosting wildlife populations. It returns more control of the home landscape to nature.

But such conservation landscaping involves more than simply quitting pruning or letting properties go to seed.

``More often than not, that would result in a yard dominated by European turf grasses and invasive species," said Dan Jaffe, horticulturist and propagator for the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in Wales, Massachusetts.

``With good planning and establishment of a well-built landscape, it will mature into a space that can be easily cultivated with lazier gardening," Jaffe said. ``When it comes right down to it, naturalistic landscapes can be very low-maintenance."

Find plants that are suited to your growing conditions and also to your goals for the site, Jaffe said.

``The great thing about working with native plants is that these are plants that will grow in any conditions you can think of," he said. ``There is no need to bring in problem plants when there are so many other options."

Weigh the risks against the rewards. Blackberries and thistles, for example, are popular with pollinators but painful to handle and difficult to contain.

``Instead, work with wild strawberries or flowering raspberries (no thorns on those) or bee balm or meadowsweet, or one of the hundreds of other options," Jaffe said.

Re-wilding also means relaxing maintenance standards. Don't rush to clean up the garden at the end of the growing season. Seeds are food to wildlife, and lifeless hollow stems are shelter. ``Birds who eat seeds appreciate it when you don't deadhead flowers," said Theresa Badurek, a horticulture agent with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. ``Less frequent mowing allows pollinators to visit flowers before you mow. Less raking leaves provides habitat for beneficial insects."

No area is too small. ``Every space we can provide for nature to blossom is valuable," Badurek said. ``Re-wilding containers can be helpful, especially if you need to add more flowers to the garden."

Talk with your neighbors and check local ordinances before going ahead. Your project can be a positive influence on others, but let them know ``the early stages of the work can look like a mess," Jaffe said. ``Converting a lawn into a meadow will look great in three years and fantastic in six, but the first year can be tough going.

``Without an explanation, neighbors could very well interpret your work as simple laziness instead of habitat construction," he said.

Herbicides should be a last resort only, Jaffe said.

``Chemicals are a tool in the toolbox, and there are some situations where invasive species have taken such a foothold that the use of herbicides can mean the difference between a project being accomplished or failing," he said.❑

This white clover, photographed May 13, 2019, growing on a lawn near Langley, Wash., is attractive to a variety of pollinators.
Associated Press